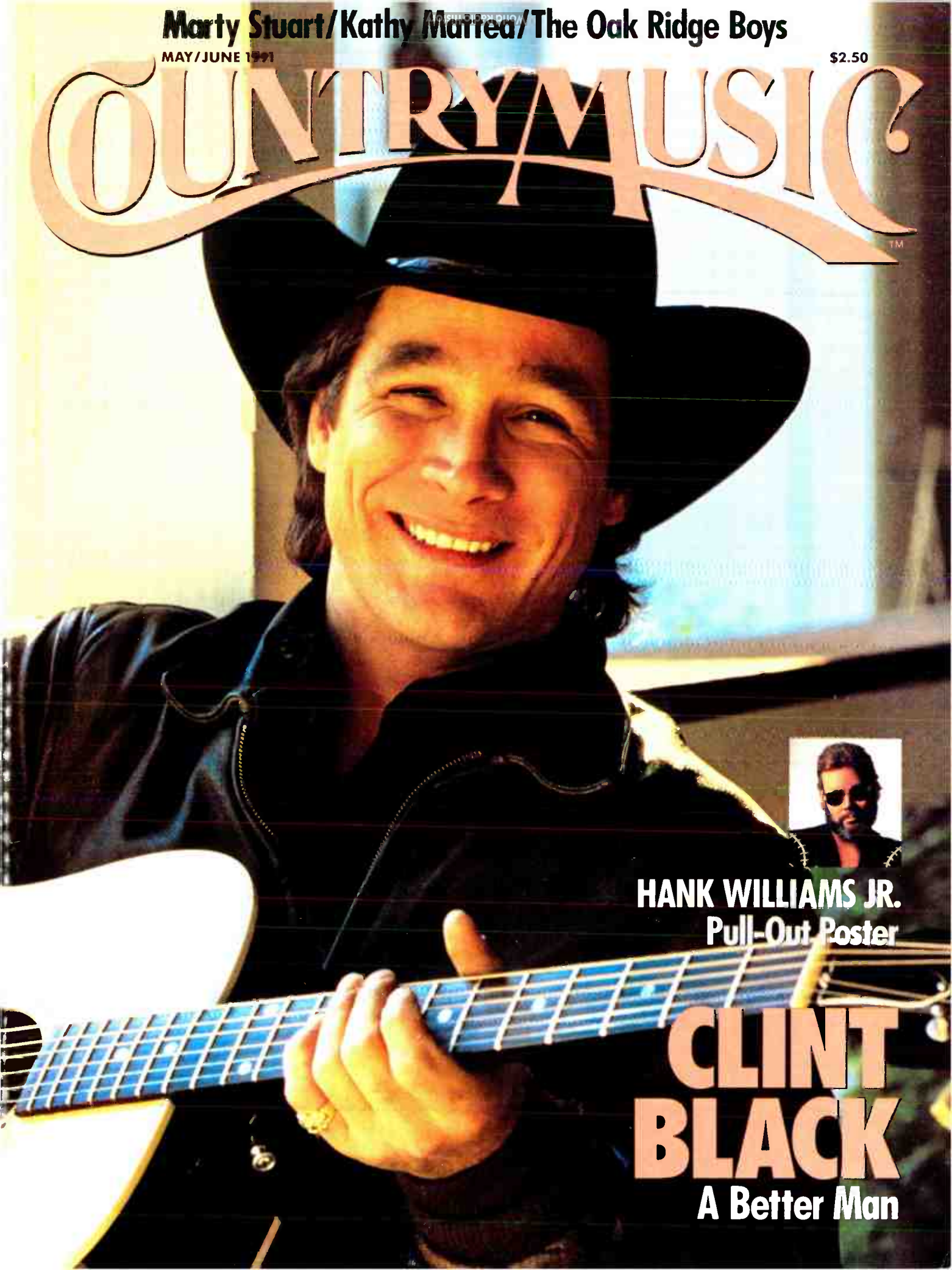


Marty Stuart/Kathy Mattea/The Oak Ridge Boys

MAY/JUNE 1991

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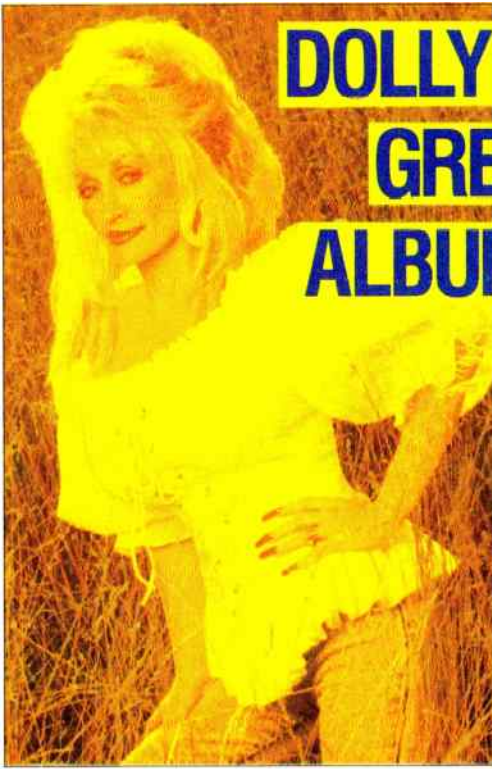
COUNTRY MUSIC™



- 3 People** *by Hazel Smith*
It's a new label for George Jones, a new member for the Opry and a new hat for Marty Stuart. Plus, country music suffers a great loss and Hazel tells of a heartfelt day. Also, a CMM Update on Johnny Gimble, and more.
- 17 Record Reviews**
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- 44 Marty Stuart: Country's Biggest Fan** *by Patrick Carr*
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- 70 Buried Treasures** *by Rich Kienzle*
MCA Records and the Country Music Foundation unite to release a Hall of Fame Series, including Ernest Tubb, Kitty Wells, Loretta Lynn, Bill Monroe and Red Foley. There's also a new American release of Jimmie Rodgers' songs, some classic Jerry Lee Lewis, a 20-song CD collection of Johnny Horton, and more.

COVER PHOTO: JIM MCGUIRE

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DOLLY COULDN'T FIND ENOUGH GREAT SONGS FOR HER NEW ALBUM. SO SHE WROTE THEM!

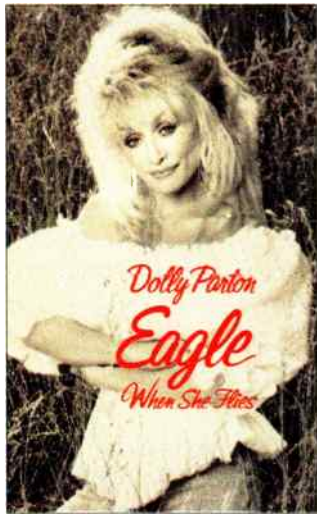
DOLLY PARTON, star of movies, television, radio, recordings, and the concert stage, says that songwriting is what she enjoys most. So when she needed an albumful of strong songs to follow-up her two number one hits from her smash *White Limozeen* album, she went ahead

and wrote them. "Eagle When She Flies is the most creative and thorough album I have ever done," says Dolly, who wound up writing 9 of the 11 songs. And, keeping it all in the family, Dolly's hit duet with Ricky Van Shelton, "Rockin' Years," was written by her brother Floyd! ★

EXTRA!

Eagle When She Flies

PRODUCED IN NASHVILLE by Steve Buckingham, Gary Smith and Dolly Parton. On Columbia Cassettes and Compact Discs.



NOW THAT'S A ★ STAR!



FROM HOLLYWOOD, California to Dollywood, Tennessee, Dolly Parton will always be #1 with her fans. Later this year watch for Dolly's NBC-TV Movie of the Week, "Big T," as well as Dolly's next major theatrical feature, "Straight Talk."

Dolly will also be appearing in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, at the grand reopening of her newly renovated theme park, Dollywood.

A great time is guaranteed for all...especially Dolly!

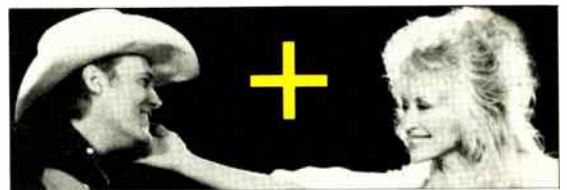
SALUTE OUR HEROES

IN YET ANOTHER FIRST, Dolly's new album includes a rare duet with a female partner. Dolly wrote the song "Best Woman Wins," and on *Eagle When She Flies* she's joined by one of country's best...CMA award winner Lorrie Morgan. ★

DOLLY + RICKY = DOUBLE DYNAMITE!

Dolly has always been country music's queen of duets, but until her current single and video, "Rockin' Years," Dolly had never recorded with multiple award-winning Best Male Vocalist,

Ricky Van Shelton. Now, their duet has exploded into one of the biggest hits of the year, and fans of both are hoping to hear more from the dynamic duo in the not-too-distant future. ★



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People

GEORGE MADE A MOVE

Everybody's favorite legend, **George Jones**, has signed a new recording contract. This time he's on MCA Records. George had been on Epic for some time now, so this is a big move, folks. Jones is currently in the studio with producer **Kyle Lehning**, working on his debut album for the label. Look for it in the fall.

THOUGHT I'D DIED AND GONE TO HEAVEN

When me and that good looking youngun of mine, **Billy Smith** (half of the Epic Records duo **Billy and Terry Smith**), took ourselves down to 328 Performance Hall to see young **Mark Chesnutt**, I was ready for "Too Cold at Home" and "Brother Jukebox." I expected a really good show by the young man from Beaumont who has the girls swooning in the aisles. When I arrived, I saw the likes of MCA label head **Bruce Hinton**, A&R head **Tony (wow) Brown**, Tony's new assistant **Renee White**, brand new A&R assistant **Renee Bell**, songwriters **Jim Rushing**, **Carl Jackson**, **Bruce Bouton**, **Wood Newton**, **Marty Brown** and **Bill Kenner**. Also saw Mark's producer **Mark Wright**, BMI's **Harry Wariner** and **Roger Sovine**, **Wild Rose's Pam Gadd**, **Mr. Ken Stilts**, who manages **The Judds**, and **Leonard Rambeau**, who manages **Anne Murray**. Then I sat down. Mark started off pretty much as I expected, singing really good, rocking onstage, getting down and boogying the night away. Chesnutt's delivery is as good as any of the giants. You could tell, however, his voice was tired. The show started around 8 P.M., and he'd been up since 4 A.M. doing radio, press and a couple of hours singing for TNN's *On Stage*. All things considered, I thought, "This is great. I'm so glad I came." Then, Mark started to sing the classic, "The Race Is On." My heart skipped a beat recalling **George Jones'** perfect version of this song, when out of the shadows I saw a silhouette so familiar to my eyes. I screamed so loud that folks sitting four rows away had their fingers in their ears. I did not care. It was him,



Signing his contract is **George Jones** with (left to right) MCA's Executive VP/Head of A&R **Tony Brown**, **Buzz Stone** (who's now affiliated with Capitol/Nashville) and **Bruce Hinton**, President MCA/Nashville. Says Hinton, "We are thrilled to have him join the MCA family."

friends. It was **George Jones**. I stood up in my chair—Billy threatened to leave he was so embarrassed. The entire room came to attention. You just knew everyone was thinking this wasn't for real, but praying it was. I got the feeling I wasn't the only hillbilly fan who thought they'd died and gone to heaven that night. The whole crowd was roaring just like they're supposed to when a legend comes to call.

EX-PREZ RONNIE REAGAN CELEBRATES 80 BIGGUNS

My favorite talk show host, *Nashville Now's* **Ralph Emery**, together with a crowd of "who's that's," attended Ex-Prez **Ronald Reagan's** 80th birthday bash at the L.A. Forum. Since Eye know or Eye see or Eye hear all there is to know, see or hear, I asked Mr. Emery to tell me about the event so I could share it with you.

Ralph replied, "A pretty impressive celebration, I would say," in his East Tennessee drawl. "Besides President **Reagan** and **Mrs. Nancy Reagan**, of

course, you see familiar faces from world news, people like **Margaret Thatcher**, Vice President **Dan Quayle** and his wife. Then you look around the room and see **Elizabeth Taylor**, **Frank Sinatra**, **Jimmy Stewart**, **Bob Hope**, **Charlton Heston**—and the list goes on and on. You can't help but crane your neck in a place like that. Then **Liza Minnelli** performs four or five songs, and it is tremendous. **Lee Greenwood** was there and sang 'God Bless the U.S.A.', and the people loved it. Lee did us proud with his performance. I was sitting with **Florence Henderson** and her husband, and **Jimmy Dean** and his girlfriend, **Donna Meade**. It was just an incredible party, to say the least."

So, friends, now you had a front row seat at **Ronnie's** 80th.

AJ

That long-legged **Alan Jackson** presented his daddy's radio to the Country Music Hall of Fame for display. Why? Fans already know that Alan referred to the radio his dad won in the song "Here

Reporter: *Hazel Smith*

Editor: *Rochelle Friedman*

People

in the Real World." By the way, since we are on the subject of Daddy Long-Legs, his music is getting a bunch of nominations for awards these days. Keep them hits a-coming, Daddy Long-Legs/A.J./Mr. Jackson. By the way, are you any kin to Andrew? He was a prez, you know, and his wife Rachel picked guitar.

FIRST THREE

The first three songs on the trade magazine *Gavin Report's* Top 100 for the year 1990 were: "Friends in Low Places," "The Dance," "Not Counting You," all by **Garth Brooks**. Song Number Four was "Home" by newcomer **Joe Diffie**.

CARLENE CARTER HASN'T ALWAYS BEEN

Though she took her famed mama and grandma's last name, **Carlene Carter** is the spit-image of her daddy/namesake, **Carl Smith**. Smith, who was a household word for hillbilly fans in the 60's, came out of retirement to perform with his child on *Nashville Now*, and I wouldn't have missed it for the world. Carl Smith is as good a singer as ever come down the pike. Wanna know what he does now? After he and Carlene's mom, **June Carter** (a.k.a. Mrs. Johnny Cash), divorced, Carl married a great



Father and daughter, Carl and Carlene.

female singer, **Goldie Hill**. The two retired from the music biz and settled on the outskirts of Nashville in Franklin, Tennessee, where they raise show horses. Carl and Goldie Smith have three other children. Course, all the smart folks who read my column know that Carlene is the granddaughter of the late, great Hall of Famer, **Mother Maybelle Carter**.

THE HEADHUNTERS AND A HOPPER



Richard Young, Fred Young, Greg Martin, Doug Phelps and Ricky Lee Phelps, a.k.a. The Kentucky HeadHunters, are joined by actor Dennis Hopper at a post-Grammy party at The Ritz in New York City. Hopper, whose grandparents live in Kentucky, helped The HeadHunters celebrate their first Grammy ever for Best Country Vocal Performance by a Group.

MEET ROB CROSBY

Rob Crosby's daddy was a Yankee, from a 300-year line of 'em. Daddy moved south, however, to go to law school, and he got a job in radio. The place was Sumter, South Carolina, where daddy met mama. Mama's great grandparents had migrated from Atlanta to escape the wrath of that bad ole Sherman in the early 1860's. Rob's brother and sister agreed to musical training. Rob, on the other hand (thank God), would not hear of it. The result is that he is a self-trained musician/songwriter/singer. He's signed to Arista Records. So there you have it in a nutshell. The boy's got enough Yankee to be educated and enough rebel to have good common sense. A Yillbilly, but it works. Give his music a listen, and remember, I told you to do it.

TANYA TOPS A DIFFERENT CHART

Tanya Tucker, singer/cowgirl these days, beat out a bunch of guys, including **Batman** star **Michael Keaton** and a bunch of gals, including super model **Christie Brinkley**, and went on to win the Futurity Celebrity Cutting Championship from the National Cutting Horse Association. The name of the horse was **Mr. San Dancer**. Tanya scored a perfect 220, as they say in the cutting horse world. Her single on Capitol, "It Won't Be Me," was a chart-topper for the Dynamite Miss "T."

CLINT BLACK JOINS THE OPRY

His first appearance on the Opry was in April 1989, just a month after his first single, "A Better Man," was released and one month before the release of his first album, *Killin' Time*. Now, less than two years later, in January 1991, that adorable **Clint Black** was named the Opry's 66th member. The induction was made during the taping of a CBS-TV special celebrating the Opry's 65th anniversary. The Opry was 65 last October, the TV show was shown in January, and I'm telling you about it now...just in case you missed it. **Garth Brooks** was the 65th member. He joined last fall.

THANKS AGAIN, RED MAN

Once again, a thank you to the Pinkerton Tobacco Company and Red Man Chewing Tobacco for sponsoring country music. The 1991 tour, starring folks like **Ricky Van Shelton, Patty Loveless, Mark Collie, Bellamy Brothers, Skip**

People

Ewing, Aaron Tippin, Highway 101, Marty Stuart, T. Graham Brown, Billy Dean and Michelle Wright, includes some 40 concerts. Red Man put \$2 1/2 million behind the tour, however, the ticket prices will again be in the teens with discounts. Fans, I know in these troubled times that these prices will be welcomed.

McDANIEL SIGNS WITH DPI

Mel McDaniel recently signed with the DPI record label. Mel visited with the servicepeople and their families at Ft. Knox, Kentucky, recently, signing autographs and smiling for the fans.

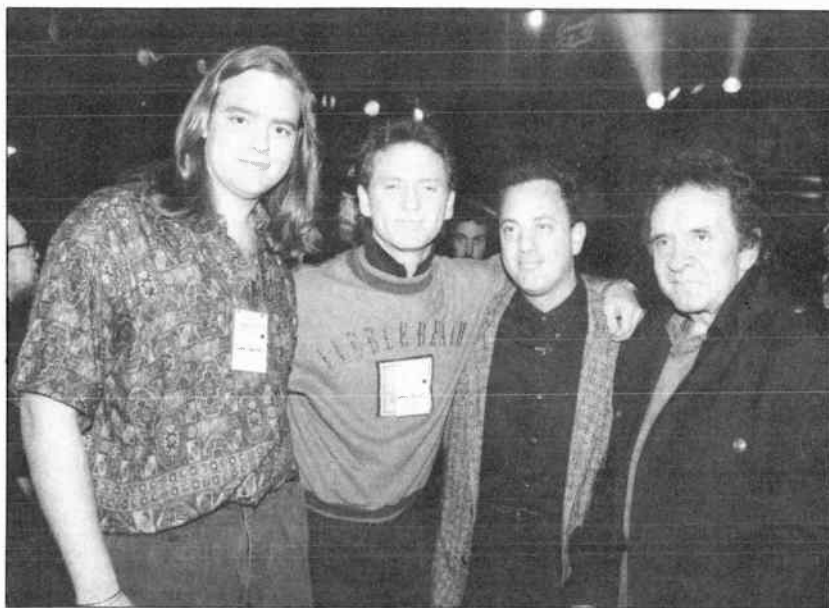
I'M SOME DUMB, BUT I AIN'T PLUMB DUMB

Read this heading again, please. I write that to write this. The Columbia release that Jack Lameier worked so hard on for five years called *Uncle Art Satherley: Country Music's Founding Father* should get nominated for a Grammy in the Spoken Word category next year. I think you will agree. This legendary old man's voice was preserved by Lameier, who promotes country singles for Epic and is a Vice President over there. He pushed and begged and shoved until the album was released. It's an historical item in the Book of Hazel. Please unearth this, and next year at Grammy time let's all have a word of prayer and thanks for the late Mr. Satherley who recorded all the original Columbia stuff on *The Carter Family*, *Roy Acuff*, *Bill Monroe*, *Bob Wills* and *Lefty Frizzell*. Like I said in the beginning of this piece, "I'm some dumb, but I ain't plumb dumb," and this is a Grammy-deserving piece if I ever saw one. And you can quote me on that.

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE

Those zany Statler Brothers have no talent to their end...excuse me, no end to their talent. Beginning in the fall, the talented foursome will have their own variety show on *The Nashville Network* (TNN). The one-hour program will be produced by Jim Owens and Associates in cahoots with Statler/Grant Productions and will be taped here in Nashville. The most awarded group in country music, these guys still reside in their hometown of Staunton, Virginia, where thousands travel every July 4th for their annual "Happy Birthday, U.S.A." celebration. My friend Kaz from Osaka, Japan, travels to Staunton every year for the three-day event. The group has

LIVING LEGENDS



During a break in the taping of the Grammy Living Legends special, Johnny Cash got to pose with (left to right) his son John Carter Cash, Larry Gatlin and Billy Joel. Cash was one of the honorees recognized for outstanding achievement and influence in the recording field.

raised thousands of dollars for local charities. Their offices are housed in the old Staunton Elementary School. I understand it is a first class operation. It seems the only place The Statlers cut up is onstage, otherwise they are astute businessmen. The Statlers have been on the Polygram label for 20 years and boast 40 albums and 70 single records. Some of their hits include the monster hit, "Flowers on the Wall," "I'll Go to My Grave Loving You" and "Class of '57." I would say The Statlers are one of the best loved acts in country music. Yours truly hopes the variety show lasts for 20 years. That would be about as long as The Statlers would want to do TV, I think. God bless you, guys, and good luck.

BELLAMY BROTHERS CHANGE LABELS

Howard and David, the Bellamy Brothers, have found a new home with Atlantic Records, according to Rick Blackburn, newly named Vice President/General Manager of the label. You know we hillbillies have parties for parties, and certainly this was no exception. We celebrated the signing at ASCAP. I, of course, attended as did the Brothers Bellamy, Blackburn, Paul Corbin with TNN and Jeff Walker, who does a tre-

mendous job promoting videos as well as Atlantic Records and other industry projects. Some of the Bellamys' hits include "Let Your Love Flow," one of my faves, "Old Hippie," 'cause I am acquainted with a gang of them, and everybody's favorite Bellamy tune, "If I Said You Had a Beautiful Body (Would You Hold it Against Me)." Something else you need to know about these guys. Their annual "Snake Rattle and Roll" jam garnered more than a hundred grand that goes to the homeless and toward environmental causes and education. And that ain't just whistling "Redneck Girl."

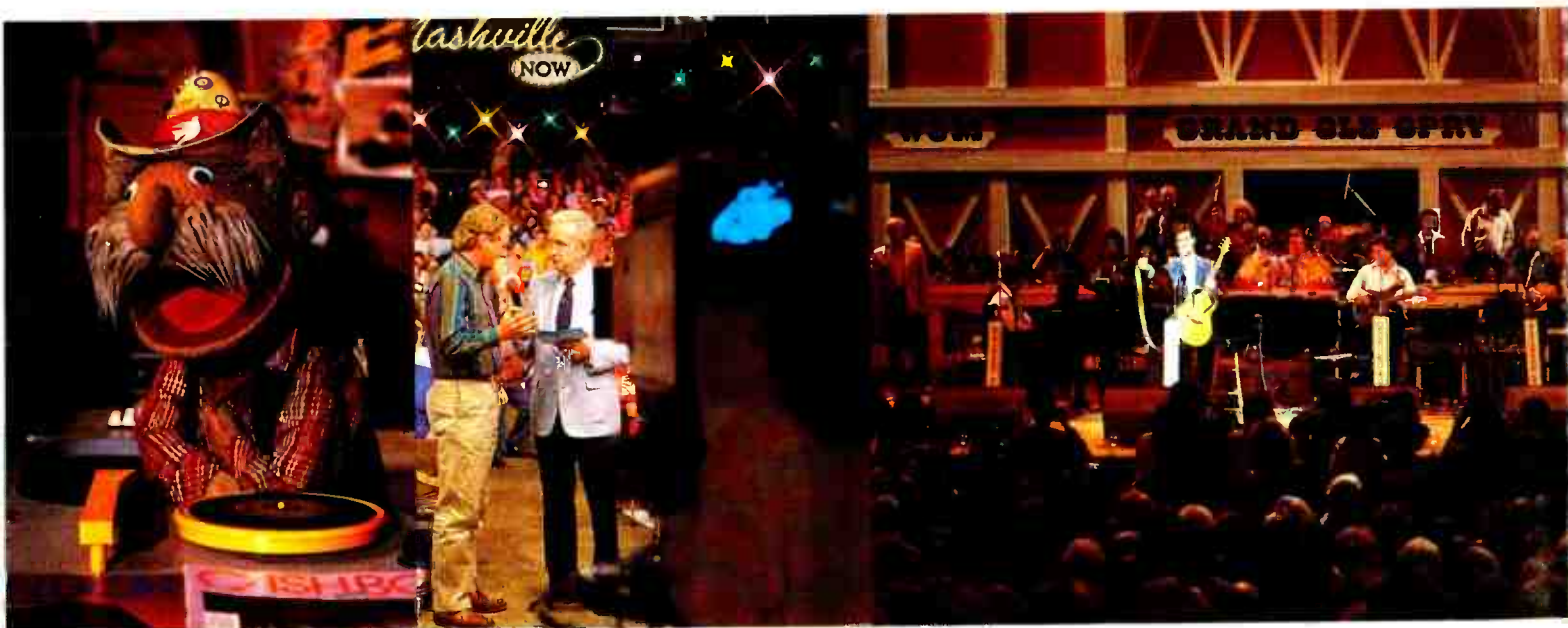
GOVERNOR ZELL MILLER? I DON'T BELIEVE THAT

Well, hell, Zell! According to my sources, Georgia's new governor's inauguration was as star-studded as a county fair in the South or Midwest. Native sons who turned out for the event included Billy Joe Royal, Doug Stone, Alan Jackson and Bill Anderson. Everybody's favorite possum, George "Possum" Jones, was also in attendance. When all was said and done, the whole shebang gathered around the microphone for a singalong of "Georgia," which is okay. Course I'd rather they sang "Peach Pickin' Time in Georgia," but we can't have everything.

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People

TRAGEDY STRIKES

Seven members of Reba McEntire's band, along with her tour manager and two pilots, were killed on March 16th when a private plane crashed in a mountainous area in Southern California near the Mexican border. The plane crashed shortly after leaving San Diego en route to a tour date in Indiana. Tour manager Jim Hammon, band leader and keyboard player Kirk Cappello, vocalist Paula Kaye Evans, guitarists Michael Thomas and Terry Jackson, keyboardist Joey Cigainero, drummer Tony Saputo and Chris Austin, a vocalist who played fiddle and acoustic guitar, were among those who were killed.

According to Jenny Bohler, spokeswoman for Reba's office, two planes left at the same time, the one that crashed and another carrying the road crew and additional band members Joe McGlohon and Pete Finney. The second plane arrived safely. McEntire herself was scheduled to leave later on a third plane.

Upon hearing of the accident, Reba and her husband, Narvel Blackstock, cancelled all scheduled tour dates and spent the weekend visiting with band members' families.

Later in the week, a memorial service was held at Christ Church in Brentwood, Tennessee, where Johnny Cash spoke for the families of those who died.

A fund to aid the families was set up, and donations can be made to The Reba McEntire Band Fund, Third National Bank, 1025 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee 37212.

Hazel Smith attended the memorial service. Her account follows:

Friends and fans, I had the privilege to attend the memorial service for the eight members of Reba McEntire's touring family who were killed. Among them was my friend, Chris Austin.

Among the several hundred mourners were family and friends of the deceased, along with Reba, Narvel Blackstock, saxophonist Joe McGlohon and steel guitarist Pete Finney.

Notables in attendance included Tennessee Governor Ned Ray McWherter, Naomi and Wynonna Judd, escorted by Larry Strickland and Tony King respectively, Vince Gill, Larry Gatlin, The Oak Ridge Boys, Steve Wariner, Bill Monroe, Sharon and Cheryl White, Terry Smith, Aaron Tippin, Garth Brooks, Joe Diffie, Johnny Cash, June Carter and John Carter Cash, Skeeter Davis, Kathy Mattea, Don Henry, Lee Greenwood, Charlie Dick (husband of the late Patsy Cline),



Kirk Cappello



Tony Saputo



Michael Thomas



Terry Jackson



Jim Hammon



Joey Cigainero



Chris Austin



Paula Kaye Evans

Billy Walker, Jim Rushing, Larry Cordle, Carl Jackson and members of Wild Rose. Among those grieving were Glen Duncan and Bill Cooley, both former band members, Randy Talmadge—who was Chris Austin's publisher at Warner/Electra, ASCAP's Shelby Kennedy, Pat Rolfe and Eve Vaupel.

Adding comfort to this most solemn day were The Reverend Dan Scott, the Christ Church Choir and Brother L.H. Hardwick Jr. The Reverend Scott allowed as how Reba found comfort in the 91st Psalm. Read it for yourself; it will make you feel better, as it did me.

By far the most compelling part of the service came from the heart of the great Johnny Cash. Reba had called Cash and asked him to speak at the service. Fans and friends, let me try to share with you the wisdom of this great man. Accompanying himself on acoustic guitar, Johnny performed the song "Jim I Wore a Tie Today," which was written by Cindy Walker. When it came time to say the name in the song, Cash replaced it with the name of each band member. He sang, "Jim, Chris, Kirk, Joey, Paula, Terry, Tony and Mike, I wore a tie today...something I seldom do." Naming the names again, he added, "I wore it for you." The song ended with the lament, "When you get to the streets of gold, stake a claim for me."

Cash spoke in terms of success, saying that "each person was successful in what they did." He said that if his life had been cut short following his first Opry performance in 1957, he too would have been successful. So, too, were those who departed.

He also spoke of his feelings when Reba called him, for his own mother had just been buried a week before. Cash told of talking to Willie Nelson and telling Willie how he had performed two days after his mother's death. Willie told his friend Cash that "it is our way of life" and went on to explain how he buried his mother one day and that very night did a performance. Friends and fans, please know it is not out of disrespect Willie sang and Johnny sang so soon after the death of their moms. It is for you.

Johnny ended his part of the service with a Hank Williams (Luke the Drifter) recitation titled "Negro Funeral." Red Foley used to perform the same recitation in his show, using the spiritual "Steal Away" as the music.

Every part of me (except my legs) stood when the great Johnny Cash completed his part of the program. My heart applauded though my hands were stilled. And after it was over, I wanted to run over and throw my arms around this great comforter of humans and scream, "Thank you, Johnny Cash." But you do not do this. It is not proper. But this is my column, and I say what I want. So for Johnny Cash I stand for an encore. I stand for respect.

Our people, the musicians, singers, the road crews are traveling people. It's the way of life. Flying from San Diego to Indiana was not unusual in the fast lane. Pastor Hardwick said the plane made an "unscheduled stop." Then added, "Death is not the end but a new beginning on the River of Life." "Amen," I said.

That's all I have to say except the show must go on. Give 'em your best, Reba.

People

ANOTHER MILESTONE FOR ANNE MURRAY

Anne Murray's hit single, "Feed This Fire," marked her 25th Top 10 record on the U.S. country charts, according to *Billboard Magazine*. It was ten years ago that Murray was in the Top 10 with her Grammy award-winning song, "Could I Have This Dance," and 20 years ago, in late 1970, that "Snowbird," her debut U.S. single, was also in the Top 10. Congrats, Anne.

TIPPIN TRIPPIN' CROSS THE OCEAN

Newcomer Aaron Tippin showed his best side, sang his best song, "You Got to Stand For Something," and gained a bunch of fans on his trip to Saudi Arabia with Bob Hope. Once again, the honesty of a country song brought out thunderous applause. The look on the faces of our servicepeople must have made the trip pure delightful for Tippin. Thank God for folks who give for others. Well, he wrote the hit, "You Got to Stand For Something." And he did...for them. Thanks, Aaron, Bob Hope and all the others.

BRAND NEW HIGHWAY

Highway 101's first performance with new vocalist/guitarist Nikki Nelson began with a blast on the evening the war broke out in the Gulf. Nelson is not new to the limelight. She grew up playing guitar and singing with her father's band, Nikki and Goldrush, throughout Nevada. Warner Brothers will release Highway 101's fifth album, *On With the Show*, in late May. Nelson replaces Paulette Carlson, who went on to pursue a solo career. Carlson will have her hands full on the homefront as well, as she is expecting a baby sometime soon.

MARTY WEARS PRODUCER'S HAT

Marty Stuart has played too much bluegrass to be real lazy. When he's off the road, he keeps himself busy. This time he busied himself producing a bluegrass gospel album on Jerry and Tammy Sullivan for the Country Music Foundation.

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE ASKED

Vern Gosdin, as of this writing, is doing fine following his bypass surgery. The best the doctors can tell, he is mended. Vern and his band have been burning up the Southeast with appearances. Vern

MARY AND WILLI AND K.T.



Mary is K.T. Oslin and Willi is actor Ray Sharkey. You may remember him from the TV series, *Wiseguy*, and the movie, *The Idolmaker*. Well, this time he's appearing in K.T.'s new video, "Mary and Willi," from the album, *Love in a Small Town*. This is K.T.'s second video from the album. It was shot at Church Street Centre Mall in Nashville with director Jack Cole at the helm. There's a little something extra in this one...music industryites participated as extras, so look out for some familiar faces.

told friends he gets tired easily, but his old buddy Waylon Jennings had warned him to expect that. We sure hope all is well with Vern. Waylon is doing great, by the way.

LAWTON CHILES IS A GOVERNOR???

Can you believe that dude's name? I checked it out and it is the truth. Lawton Chiles is the new governor of the great state of Florida. The Bellamy Brothers helped welcome the new Gov into office as did fellow Floridians Stephen Stills and The Allman Brothers Band. Allman member Dickie Betts was borned and raised in Bradenton, Florida.

BILLY BOB'S TEXAS CELEBRATES 10

Congratulations must go out to "The World's Largest Honky Tonk," Billy Bob's Texas, located in the historic Fort Worth Stockyards. Billy Bob's opened in 1981 during the *Urban Cowboy* craze and continued to prosper with the exception of a short down time in 1988, during which time the club changed hands. One of the main attractions in Billy Bob's is

live professional bull riding, held every Friday and Saturday night in the rodeo arena inside the club. The other attraction, of course, is the music. From George Jones to Alan Jackson, Billy Bob's promises to keep booking top names. This year's schedule includes Johnny Cash, Merle Haggard, Dwight Yoakam, Willie Nelson, Tanya Tucker and many more.

SPEAKING OF THE OPRY'S 65TH

Last October the Opry celebrated her 65th birthday. The TV folks got around to celebrating in January '91. During the filming of the TV show, the great Roy Acuff declared, "We've seen a lot of changes in what we used to call 'hillbilly music', but the reason the Opry is celebrating 65 years is that we've held onto our roots." Amen, and amen, Brother Acuff. You are right on, sir. For instance, there's 51 years between Acuff's joining the Opry in '38 and Patty Loveless becoming a member in 1989, but both artists represent the best of country music tradition. No other entertainment field can boast anything even close to this fact. Don't you just love it, and aren't you proud of this music of ours?

GMM UPDATE: *Johnny Gimble*

These days Johnny Gimble lives in Round Rock, Texas, north of Austin. The former Texas Playboy and Nashville studio musician, who gained even greater fame through his CMA Instrumentalist of the Year awards (he has received this honor five times—in 1975, 1986, 1987, 1989 and 1990) and his recent appearances with Chet Atkins and public radio raconteur Garrison Keillor, is taking it easy these days, but not much.

Last year he released *Intro to Gimble Fiddlin'*, his first fiddle instruction video. "I did it here at home with my son, Dick. He played guitar and worked the camera," Johnny says. "I just talked about how I learned to play fiddle...I answered questions that people have asked me for 40 years about how I do things—bowing, fingering and all sorts of things about fiddlin'. I gave credit to the guys where I learned it down through the years, like Cliff Bruner and Cecil Brower. I just sold it here from home for \$35. It runs an hour and a half." Bruner and Brower were Western swing fiddle legends; Gimble's son Dick often plays bass with his dad. A bit of a legend himself, Johnny was a key member of several of Bob Willis' bands and did studio work in Dallas with Lefty Frizzell, Ray Price and Marty Robbins.

Gimble's planning a second volume of instruction and is editing a video for his non-musician fans: a tape featuring him playing a dance with his band. "We just played about an hour, 13 tunes, five minutes of jams," he explains. "I put a bunch of old songs on it, like 'Beaumont Rag.'" Also included, he says, are his own tune, "Fiddlin' Around," and such old favorites as, "Gardenia Waltz," "Maiden's Prayer," "Faded Love" and "Liebestraum." He plans to market it at dances and via mail order.

Gimble still does occasional recording sessions in Nashville. "I go to Nashville when anybody calls and buys a plane ticket," he says. "I work for double scale, and usually you do two or three sessions a day, so it makes it worthwhile. But I've slowed down. They've got some great young fiddlers there that are doin' good." He still records with George Strait, though. "I've been doin' George's last eight or ten albums, and when I get a call, I go up there. George's sessions



Gimble lives in Texas but still does some Nashville session work.

are pretty live," he explains. "We all get in the same room and do it. You put on headphones, but you're sittin' there lookin' at each other. It's not like goin' in and pastin' a part on there," he concludes, distinguishing Strait's approach to recording from ordinary over-dubbing.

Johnny was to host an hour-long series, *Gimble's Music Ranch*, on Willie Nelson's cable-TV Cowboy Television Network; CTN never got off the ground. But another Willie project, The Outlaw Channel, debuted February 14th. On the pilot shows Gimble taped, he hosted Texas friends like legendary singer-songwriter, Floyd Tillman, and ex-Playboy steel guitarist, Herb Remington. "They still think we'll do some of those for The Outlaw Channel," he explains.

"What I like to do is what I'm doin' here, gettin' to play dances and concerts," he goes on. Last October he and several ex-Playboys, including guitarist Eldon Shamblin and steel guitarist Bobby Koefer, played the first annual Cowboy Symposium, a celebration of cowboy lifestyles, in Texas. He's also playing a Western swing festival in Texas in June and a dance for the Legends of Golf Tournament where he'll be leading a band with Remington and former Playboy vocalist, Leon Rausch. He's also booked at festivals in Washington State and in Ohio.

"The calendar," he says, "is gettin' full."
—RICH KIENZLE

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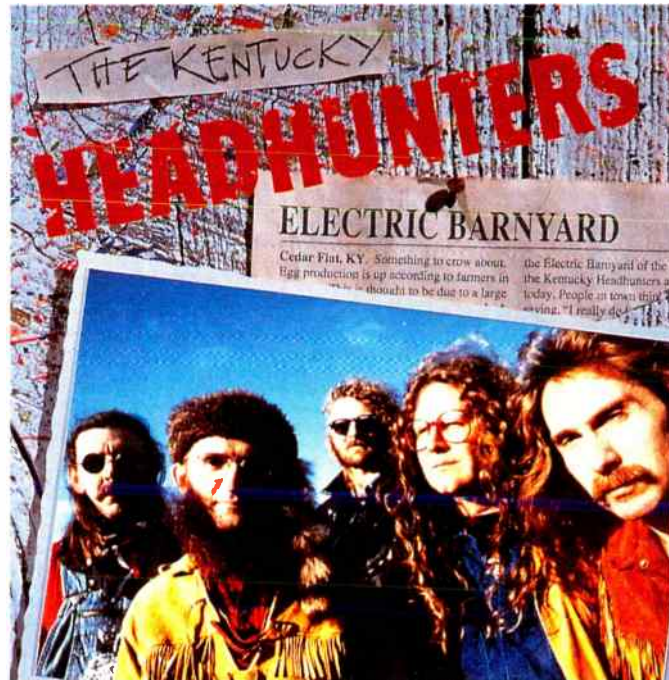
Record Reviews

Kentucky HeadHunters
Electric Barnyard
Mercury 848 054-4

With *Electric Barnyard*, the follow-up to their best-selling, award-winning 1990 debut album, *Pickin' on Nashville*, The Kentucky HeadHunters come blowing in like a fresh breath of dirty air once again. And it looks like their second album is going to survive all the inevitable comparisons to their first one.

Electric Barnyard is an exuberant, tongue-in-cheek (maybe *toe* in cheek describes it better!) record that more or less picks up where *Pickin'* left off. Though cast very much in the same musical spirit as its predecessor, *Barnyard* may even be a shade better than that rowdy, aggressive debut that took them on a roller coaster ride from virtually nowhere to the top of the charts. Once again, the five HeadHunters (the two brothers Phelps, the two brothers Young and the Youngs' first cousin, guitarist Greg Martin) have handled the bulk of the songwriting themselves. Eight of the 13 songs here were co-written by all or some of the band members (sometimes with help from various friends). The remaining five cuts are a motley, hillbillyish assortment of covers.

Acting as their own producers and arrangers as well, the Heads have imbued every cut with a garagey-sounding, live-in-the-studio rawness and immediacy that never let up. *Electric Barnyard* (sides A and B of the album are subtitled "Steppin' In It" and "Walkin' Through It," respectively) practically bursts at the seams with energy, from



the first track clean through to the last.

Aside from The HeadHunters' always ragged but always right harmonies, the real stars are Greg Martin's wailing, heavily reverbed lead guitar and sinewy little Fred Young's impressive power drumming. (Fred's the one with the coonskin cap.) Young's crashing snare and bass licks push the rhythm and propel the band onward to wilder, more unrestrained heights. (No click tracks need apply here.)

The HeadHunters' musical tastes are anchored firmly in what were surely their formative years, musically speaking: the late 60's and early 70's. In their quirky, sometimes intentionally goofy choices of material to cover, they reveal themselves as lovers of rock and country kitsch and B-side esoterica of yesteryear. (I wouldn't be at all surprised to see them cover tunes by someone like

The Beau Brummels, or maybe even Little Jimmy Dickens, the next time around.) They also delight in brashly mixing widely varying musical styles in a manner that no doubt drives the purists up the wall. (A good place for them, I say.)

By this method, an old Bill Monroe bluegrass chestnut ("With Body and Soul"), a cornball 60's TV theme song ("The Ballad of Davy Crockett") and a 1960's Waylon Jennings hit ("Only Daddy That'll Walk the Line"), are all transformed into wailing, full-tilt country-rockers—with only the faintest hint of parody.

"Always Making Love," a band original, has strong echoes of the early Beatles in its harmonies, harmonica riffs and rhythm guitar hooks. "Take Me Back" (another band collaboration) is imbued with shades of Marshall Tucker. The jokey novelty number, "Mexican Dinner"

(pronounced *Deeener*—also written by the band), with its cheesy organ accompaniment and hokey lyrics, could have been lifted straight off the B-side of a mid-60's album by Paul Revere & The Raiders.

From the drift of all this, you can tell that on *Electric Barnyard* The HeadHunters are being funny and self-effacing as usual, determined to avoid anything smacking of "hipness." They *know* full well that they caught everyone off guard when they came riding in out of left field, with the unkempt look and stage moves of a backwoods wrangling tag team and wardrobes to prove it. Now, they never seem to miss a chance to play to that image. However, The HeadHunters also know that they are *good*. Precision, control underpin even the most hilarious moments on this album. The compe antics on songs like "It's Chitlin' Time" (a tribute to the long-running live radio show that made The HeadHunters a local hit in Central Kentucky before they blew into Nashville), and the salacious tone of "16 and Single" enhance rather than undercut the power of the music.

Moreover, *Electric Barnyard*, for all its musical high jinx, has its share of serious moments. There's the somber bleakness of "Kickin' Them Blues Around," the homesick "Take Me Back" and the self-righteous, philosophical "Wishin' Well." There's even a lighthearted remake of the early 70's Norman Greenbaum rock hit, "Spirit in the Sky."

All of which is to say, *Electric Barnyard* is good, clean, scruffy fun: high-energy, Kentucky-style, garage-country-rock that's well worth raving about.

—BOB ALLEN

Record Reviews

Pam Tillis *Put Yourself in My Place* Arista AR 8642

Yep, she's Mel's daughter, if you hadn't figured that out yet, and she's been around for awhile. In the mid- to late 1980's, she had an album and five minor (*very* minor) hits on Warner Brothers, and she's been developing as a writer around Nashville for some time. Now, she has a major label debut that matters, with the added advantage of top-drawer production by Paul Worley and Ed Seay, who produce Highway 101. The result is a quirky but likable effort with a distinctive edge that, like 101, tips its hat to contemporary, country-rock and traditional sounds, combining the best of all. Vocally, Tillis' range is similar to Paulette Carlson's. (Carlson, former lead singer of Highway 101, left the band recently to pursue a solo career. She's been replaced by Nikki Nelson.)

As a writer Pam may not be quite on Mel's level yet, but she's getting there, having co-written seven of the ten songs here with male collaborators. None of the male co-writers overwhelmed her, for the songs reflect a woman's perspective, though they aren't "women's songs" as such. My sole production gripe is the fact that the vocal chorus at times nearly overwhelms Pam's own strong voice.

The thumping "Put Yourself in My Place," which Pam and Carl Jackson co-wrote, kicks things off. It contrasts greatly with the next number, the haunting "Melancholy Child," co-written with Bob DiPiero (whom Tillis recently married). This engrossing number about a family plagued by its own foibles and weirdness mixes joy and sadness. It's a masterpiece. The minor-keyed Irish melody, enhanced by mandolin and fiddle, is the perfect foil for the lyrics. The



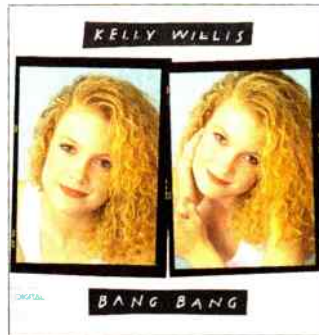
other Tillis-DiPiero collaboration, "Already Fallen," is trivial by comparison.

Michael Anderson's "Maybe It Was Memphis" is the one clunker far below the quality of the rest of the record. Commercial? Sure is, with its shallow images of novelist William Faulkner and playwright Tennessee Williams placed there to enhance the Southern flavor. Since there's not much else to the song, the imagery doesn't help. It's even worse when compared to "Blue Rose Is," a sorrowful honky tonk ballad of an unhappy woman looking for love wherever she can.

The first big hit from this one, the angry Harlan Howard-Max Barnes tune, "Don't Tell Me What to Do," has a strong lyric, one to which Pam more than does justice. "One of Those Things," a sad, resigned, Tillis-Paul Overstreet chronicle of the end of romance, has a contemporary edge, yet fits well with everything else. The clever honky tonker, "Draggin' My Chains," written with Rick Carnes, brings a shell-shocked ex-lover back to old haunts and is, in many ways, a song Mel himself could have recorded. The great lyrics continue with "Ancient History," a delightful love song done up shuffle style.

You don't necessarily hit the top right away if you're the child of a superstar. Ask Lorrie Morgan, who knocked around Nashville for nearly a decade before she made it. Pam paid her dues, too. And they've sure paid off here.

—RICH KIENZLE



Kelly Willis *Bang Bang* MCA 10141

I thought Kelly Willis' 1990 debut, *Well-Traveled Love*, was easily among the year's best records, right up there with Dwight's and Patty Loveless' new ones and the debuts by Aaron Tippin, Lee Roy Parnell and Alan Jackson. What got me was Willis' strong, sensual voice and sublime phrasing, which snapped and jumped out of the speakers.

One big factor was the presence of her terrific band, Radio Ranch, augmented by a few carefully chosen studio pickers. The material was consistently fine, with some of the best songs written by Radio Ranch drummer Mas Palermo, who could have a songwriting career any time he wanted to hang up his drums. This time Willis, with Tony Brown again producing, uses a first-ticket Nashville studio lineup that, combined with top-notch material, takes on a life of its own.

She successfully tackles such quality songs as Joe Ely's "Settle for Love" and the Steve Earle-Robert Earl Keen number "Sincerely (Too Late to Turn Back Now)." The latter gets a reading nearly as good as Earle's own. Greek hillbilly songwriter Kostas, who seems to collaborate on a lot of songs these days, shows up twice, having collaborated on "The Heart That Love Forgot" with Palermo and with Willis herself on the hit sin-

gle, "Baby Take a Piece of My Heart." Both are fine, delightfully simple numbers, superbly performed. That same simplicity enhances Paul Kelly's number, "Hidden Things," again mastered by Willis with seemingly little effort. Willis, a Virginian, also goes for the gut with a revival of fellow Virginia artist Janis Martin's 1958 rock classic, "Bang Bang," a song she has more than enough raunch to pull off. Amazingly, Willis goes one step further and cuts Martin's original to ribbons. True rockabilly has a sense of crazed spontaneity; Martin's was too carefully planned out to qualify, though some of the more obsessed European rockabilly fans think her version is the real thing. In the end, Willis' churning, out-of-control version is everything Martin's tried—and failed—to be.

The barroom stomp of Tom Clifford's "Standing by the River" combines a kicking Western swing beat, Willis' toothy snarl, some tremendous lead guitar from Smith and a tight little piano solo from John Jarvis, with lines like: *Weepin' willow stands there, limbs all hangin' down/Tellin' me it knows how I feel/Never makin' a sound*. The result is an absolute gem. Nine out of ten ain't bad, though when Willis blows it, she really misses. Jim Lauderdale's ballad, "Not Afraid of the Dark," suffers from a pretentious arrangement, which, combined with her over-dramatic delivery, renders it pompous and forgettable.

I don't want to end this without mentioning another star: guitarist Stuart Smith of Rodney Crowell's band, easily one of the most awesome pickers around today. Smith, who appears on nearly every number, acquits himself brilliantly. He sounds like he may rip the guts out of his instrument any second. Listen to "I'll Try Again" and his lead and slide guitar breaks on "Too Much to Ask." You

JIMMY

BY ELKE HUTCHENS

Playing with his brand new toy train, he's as happy as a little boy can be!



Doll shown smaller than actual seated height of approximately 10", including the engineer's hat.

Record Reviews

gotta hear it to believe it.

It's sure nice to hear an artist improve on a debut. So many do everything they know the first time out and never get any further. With *Bang Bang*, Willis, with Tony Brown's production, has consolidated her strengths from the first album to create an effort even more satisfying and exhilarating than the first.

—RICH KIENZLE

George Strait *Chill of an Early Fall* MCA-10204

There is a deadly efficiency in the way George Strait and his longtime producer, Jimmy Bowen, have been cranking out best-selling albums of late. (Reportedly, Strait knocked out the lead vocals for *Livin' It Up*, his masterpiece of last year, in a mere four or five days—the boy doesn't mess around in the studio.)

Chill of an Early Fall, Strait's 11th studio album (which also coincidentally marks his 10th anniversary as a recording artist), is cut from so much the same musical cloth as *Livin' It Up* and features so many of the same session players, that a casual listener might conclude it had been pieced together from outtakes from the same sessions. The number of cuts that include Strait's Ace in the Hole Band is about the same, too: three on *Chill*, two on *Livin' It Up*. Which, I suppose, adds up to saying that *Chill of an Early Fall*, as commendable and pleasant a record as it is, comes across as something less than the taut, streamlined but soulful masterpiece that *Livin' It Up* was.

Though it's hard to find fault with any individual cut, taken as a whole, Strait's latest collection lacks balance, focus and fire, and has a vaguely pedestrian feel when measured against his usual standard. Sorely lacking are the sort of provocative, subtle



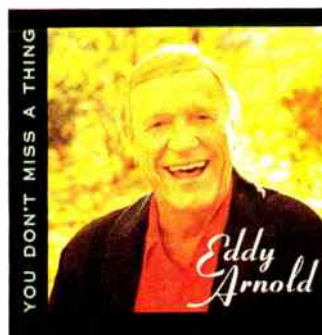
songs like "Love Without End, Amen," "I've Come to Expect It From You" and "Drinking Champagne" that inspired Strait to stretch his abilities as a vocal interpreter on *Livin' It Up*. In their place is an assortment of pretty, slightly prosaic love ballads, like the title tune by Green Daniel and Gretchen Peters, "If I Know Me" by Dean Dillon and Pam Belford and "You Know Me Better Than That," a funny, realistic vignette by Tony Haselden and Anna Lisa Graham that wryly explores how love blinds us to a loved one's glaring flaws. Strait's rendition of Harlan Howard's "Anything You Can Spare" (a minor single for Lefty Frizzell in 1962) is a true high point in this collection.

To those who've been fortunate enough to see Strait's fine live show, this album will also deliver a certain sense of *deja vu*. Three songs on side two feature inspired workouts by Strait and The Ace in the Hole Band on songs that are centerpieces of the road show. One is the Western swing standard, "Milk Cow Blues," a great five-minute performance from Strait and the boys which leaves you wondering why they didn't go a step further and do an *actual* live recording. Floyd Jenkins' "Home in San Antonio" and Hank Williams' "Lovesick Blues" are the other two. Familiarity certainly doesn't breed contempt in this instance, but, if you've been lucky enough to see the live show more than once, it does breed...well, familiarity.

All of this is not to say that

Chill of an Early Fall is a dud or anything of the kind—far from it. In fact, I'm guessing that it will garner Strait the predictable two or three Number One hits. What's vaguely unsettling, though, is its slightly patchwork feel, as if Strait were merely filling the gaps and buying some time before getting on to the next project. I have this sinking feeling that, with the competition being what it is today, Strait's going to have to shoot a little higher than this next time around if he intends to stay in the running.

—BOB ALLEN



Eddy Arnold *You Don't Miss a Thing* RCA 3020-4-R

I have this real specific image of Eddy Arnold. I'm still in high school, and I'm sitting at the counter in my parents' kitchen. It's cold outside, winter, and, as usual, it's raining. My mother is smoking a Marlboro, my father is fiddling with the clock radio. He finally finds a "country-politan" station, and Eddy Arnold is on the radio. Singing "Make the World Go Away," something like that. His voice sweeps to the string background, filling the warm kitchen.

That, my father says with the finality that only a father can muster, is *music*, not that rock 'n' roll crap.

Of course, the times and the music changed. Country-politan went the way of the Great Auk, then got resur-

rected, then sank again. The smooth pop sounds of Eddy Arnold got washed away by rough-edged guys from Texas, then slick L.A. guys, then guys with white hats. Eddy Arnold himself went through some fairly serious health problems.

And now, interestingly enough, he's back, with another new album from RCA.

His voice on *You Don't Miss a Thing* is a little more tentative, a little less sure than the Eddy Arnold of the early 1960's. It is still, however, a marvelous instrument, velvet all the way. And he still retains a master's touch in choosing songs to display that voice. In this follow-up to his comeback album of last year, *Hand Holdin' Songs*, he leans heavily on songwriter Fred O. Knipe, who seems to have a knack for matching songs to Mr. Smooth's voice. The title cut, "Snowfall," and "Can I Put You in a Love Song" are all from Knipe and will all be instantly familiar to Eddy Arnold fans.

Personally, I like "(I'd Choose) You Again," a ubiquitous Schlitz/Overstreet collaboration first cut by The Forester Sisters. I always liked the song for the way it dealt with real life—sort of like real life, and Arnold's voice gives it a special poignancy.

There was a time when I'd have railed against the second (or third, or forth) coming of country-politan or whatever the heck you want to call it. These days, it seems like country's flexible enough to encompass a lot of different styles. Maybe it's Eddy Arnold's time again.

—MICHAEL BANE

Daniele Alexander *I Dream in Color* Mercury Polygram 846 917-4

Small thing, says the Record Reviews Editor at *Country Music Magazine*, but do you think you can get through a review of Daniele Alexander's

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Record Reviews

album without mentioning her legs? She knows me well, that editor.

Well, Lord knows I was going to try.

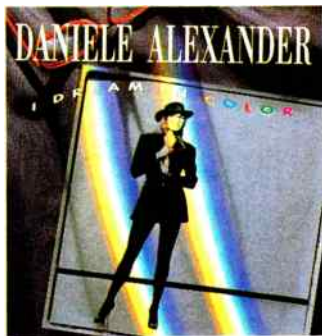
It's just they're such... long...legs. Spike heels. Black tights. Sally Jesse Raphael glasses that make Ms. Alexander look something like a feral librarian. Country singers have come a long way since Kitty Wells. A...long...way.

Well, heck, she can sing, too. Got one of those barroom voices, sort of smoky, feels like someone in Sally Jesse Raphael glasses dragging her fingernails (red, subcategory blood) along the back of your neck. Trips reactions. Shorts circuits. Things like that.

If I were Harold Shedd, who produced this sucker, I think I would have trusted a little more in Ms. Alexander's voice. Little less synthesizer. Little less sweetening on tracks like "Take Time," a good song Ms. Alexander wrote with Rich Grissom. Ditto for the opening duet with Butch Baker, "It Wasn't You, It Wasn't Me." I don't know, the mix just doesn't feel right to me, like her voice is fighting a little with the background instruments. Like they're still looking for the right formula for this particular smoky voice.

Tell you what I like, though. Title track—"I Dream in Color"—which is sort of about the eternal chasm between he and she. She wants love; he's out the door. Another song from Ms. Alexander. Fact is, she's a good songwriter, has a feel for the problems between men and women and how they never seem to ever get straightened out. Lot of reaching, not much touching. I like that about these songs.

The "Two Days a Week" duet reminds me of the kind of song Louise Mandrell and R.C. Bannon used to specialize in. The other duets are a little poppish for me, but then I've been listening to a lot of M.C. Hammer, and I think



it may be beginning to jello my mind.

Ms. Alexander also sings "Misty Blue," not one of my favorite songs, in a way that could change my mind, maybe. I'd like to hear it a little smokier, more toward k.d. lang doing "Three Cigarettes in an Ashtray," than a straight country ballad. I mean, heck, the woman can sing. Step back and let her sing.

And, by the way, Ms. Alexander, if you're ever sitting around boring Music City with time on your hands, just, what the heck, whistle. Or whatever. —MICHAEL BANE

Marsha Thornton *Maybe the Moon Will Shine* MCA-10142

Some of you wonder how we critics do our jobs, why we come to the conclusions we do and why those conclusions sometimes differ so much from your own. It's time someone walked you through it. I won't say this is exactly how everyone does it. I suspect my colleagues all have individual variations.

First off, the main job of a critic is to *listen critically* and formulate an opinion. That *doesn't* mean one automatically looks for flaws. I have to decide if I feel the artist and the producer have: (a) created a quality effort, (b) succeeded in what they were trying to do, (c) made individual performances succeed. Then I have to consider (d) how the entire album fits into the context of

what they've done before and, finally, (e) what the album reveals about the artist today. In the case of a new artist, I'd add (f) whether or not they've established a foothold. Amid all of this, I have to give you information on the songs and the musicians and the difference the latter's work makes in the outcome of the record.

Normally I listen once and then, to glean more information and insight, I go back and listen again. To do justice to the album and do my job as a critic, it's essential to verify that first impression and get further below the surface. Sometimes it takes many more listenings to reach the conclusions I come to.



The following comments were my first impression of *Maybe the Moon Will Shine*. After repeated listenings, I still think they're valid. Marsha Thornton is a talented vocalist. She showed that on her debut album last year, which had a definite Patsy Cline flavor—no surprise since Owen Bradley produced it. This time, the feel of late 70's Emmylou runs through everything, also not surprising considering the fact that Steve Fishell, former member of Emmylou's Hot Band, produced it. He also played here, as did other Hot Band alumni, Glen D. Hardin on piano and Albert Lee on electric guitar and mandolin.

Many of the songs are excellent, among them "You Better Straighten Up and Love Right" co-written by Harlan Howard and Linda Killen, "Is There a Way" by Kostas and Dean Folkvord,

"Trouble Free," a contemporary bluegrass number by Jerry Salley and Carl Jackson. The title track is so infectious I can't believe it won't do incredibly well on the radio. I also liked "Is It Too Soon to Tell," which has an easy 1930's or 40's swing.

Now comes a crucial fork in the road: the second listening. I may find that not only was I right the first time, there are even more strong points. Beauty in records, as in other arts, is often slowly revealed. I may find myself drawn even further into the material. It can work the other way, too. I may be less impressed, or have had a bad impression on the first run and find the record has even more flaws. Or a good first impression might fade. Here's what I felt about Thornton's second album the second and third time through:

Why does this album, taken as a whole, leave me unimpressed? Despite the good songs, Thornton's good singing and the dobro and fiddle licks falling in the right places, something's missing.

In the end the entire package comes off like just that—a carefully crafted, letter-perfect but boring package. It's the new traditionalist equivalent of elevator music—every note in place, emotions flash-frozen and sterile, as bad as any crossover record. Factor in Thornton's lack of an individual vocal style, and that combination dilutes the entire record. She seems unsure who she wants to be—Patsy Cline the first time, Emmylou this time, God knows who the next time. Not good at all.

At this point, I suspect I know your reaction, dear readers: angry letters with phrases like, "What's going on here? I like the album, I like Thornton, and Kienzle's supposed to like traditionalists. What does he want? Another slew of crossover pop fluff from Music Row?" Time for the final conclusion:

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Record Reviews

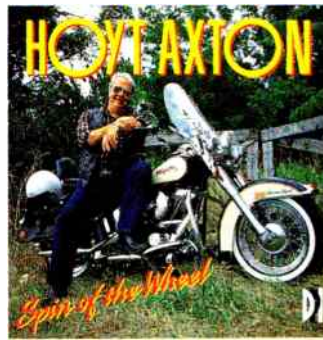
artist. All traditionalists aren't automatically great; all crossover folks aren't awful. Passion, individuality and conviction have to be present or, for me, the whole thing is doomed to fail, whether or not some of the songs become hits. I'd rather hear a few rough edges and an artist's individuality. Thornton conjures up everyone else but herself, and frankly, I'd like to hear *her*, not her version of someone else's greatness.

—RICH KIENZLE

Hoyt Axton *Spin of the Wheel* DPI CD-1000

Hoyt Axton's been away from the recording studio for quite some time—he's been concentrating on his acting career—but he's now resurfaced on DPI Records with *Spin of the Wheel*, an eclectic, 14-song collection on which Hoyt rolls his way through a full range of musical styles, from the pure country balladry of "Mountain Right," to the free-wheeling, unabashed gospel of "Thank You, Lord." Hoyt really shines on the latter, a joyful tune where he lets loose with his growling vocals and sings: *I believe in music/It's the food I feed my soul/Country-western-boogie-woogie-gospel-rock 'n' roll.* Add in a little folk and rhythm and blues, and you've got an apt description of this album. The co-producers, Donna Roberts Axton (at the time, Hoyt's wife) and Al Johnson, kept the instrumentation spare on many songs, giving Hoyt's big voice room to fill out the sound.

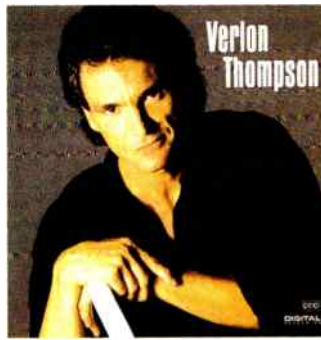
The majority of the cuts were penned by Hoyt himself, although a few are from other writers, most notably his mother, Mae Axton. One of her contributions is "Heart-break Hotel," the Elvis smash which she co-wrote. Hoyt reworks the song interestingly here, giving it a revved-up, rhythm and blues feel, plus a



1970's-style female back-up chorus. Hoyt also covers "The Weight," the late 60's classic rock hit by The Band, an appropriate tune, since Hoyt's musical career goes back to that 60's folk-rock scene.

Some of the best cuts on the album are the ones that stay closest to straight-ahead country. The aforementioned "Mountain Right," with its involving story about pride and standing your ground, is one of these. It was the album's first single ("Heart-break Hotel" is the second), and was backed-up by a spectacular video featuring (among others) character actor Denver Pyle (remember him from *The Dukes of Hazzard*), Ken Kercheval of *Dallas* and singer/actor Ed Bruce. Another stand-out cut is "American Dream," a simple story song of getting through the hard times with love and family. The simplicity of this message, underscored by the chorus, *Life goes on/And some dreams do come true*, makes for an uplifting and infectious song.

This approach is in evidence elsewhere—on the bluesy title cut with its working-class theme, on the poetic "Young Man" (the other Mae Axton tune) and on the sweet and subdued duet with Linda Ronstadt, "I Collect Hearts." Which is not to say that all of the songs are the same. Some of Hoyt's songs are multi-layered and compel listeners to pay close attention and draw their own conclusions—listen to "Mr. Winchester's Gun" and "Cowboys on Horses With Wings," and you'll see what I



mean.

In the liner notes Hoyt says, "This music is my wish of life abundant and bright, full of joy to you and those for whom you care." That sentiment certainly shines through on *Spin of the Wheel*. With its range of styles, there's something here for everyone. It's good to have Hoyt back.

—GEORGE FLETCHER

Verlon Thompson *Verlon Thompson* Capitol C4 94970

Listening to singer/songwriter Verlon Thompson's mightily impressive debut Capitol album, a number of stylistic comparisons leap to mind: Mickey Newbury, B.J. Thomas, James Taylor or (to draw a female comparison) Beth Nielsen Chapman.

Thompson, who's played guitar on records by Guy Clark, Suzy Bogguss and Restless Heart, possesses a rich, slightly tenory voice and is a wizard at crafting songs. He often writes with folks like Richard Leigh, Rhonda Fleming and Wayland Holyfield. On this album, he establishes himself as a master of introspective ballads of romantic loss ("The End Is Only the Beginning," "Slow Goodbye") and moving personal statements of hard-fought hope and the ability to rise above disappointment ("More Than Tracks," "Makes You Wanna Slow Down").

The list of people who've recorded the Oklahoma-born Thompson's songs is, itself, tes-

timony to his musical gifts: Randy Travis, Guy Clark (a *songwriter's* songwriter), Suzy Bogguss, T. Graham Brown, Barbara Mandrell and The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, among others. Great balladeers may be a dime a dozen in Nashville, but Thompson reminds us just how good a country-flavored pop ballad can be when it's really done right. His lyrics are sparse, direct and conversational. His melodies possess a bold, sometimes melodramatic, pop resonance. His original songs and confident performances of them are planted firmly in the country-folk-pop tradition exemplified by artists like James Taylor and B.J. Thomas.

On "She's the One" (co-written with Billy Spencer), the listener is propelled headlong into the frenetic account of a man who falls in love at the expense of practicality and perhaps even sanity: *Nature's got a way of bringing a proud man down just a notch or two/ Making him beg—making him cry—and wonder what to do.* "Stop the Rain" (by Richard Leigh and Wayland Holyfield) is the only non-Thompson original here, but shows his power as a singer nonetheless. It's a sensual, tortured reminiscence of a romantic encounter in backstreet New Orleans that almost oozes heat and atmosphere. It may be the best country song of its kind since the Vince Mathews/Gene Watson hit, "Love in the Hot Afternoon," back in 1975.

As for "Slow Down" (co-written with Rhonda Fleming), its catchy instrumental hooks and compelling lyrics make it sound as if it were written for pop balladeer James Taylor; it seems destined to be a hit for somebody, if not for Thompson himself.

Producer Blake Chancey has done Thompson a great service here, anchoring his piano- and guitar-framed vocal performances in uncluttered, crystal-clear instrumental settings. What better way to showcase such an impressive and welcome new talent on the scene.

—BOB ALLEN

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Joe Bonsall

Duane Allen

Steve Sanders

Richard Sterban

20 Questions with THE OAK RIDGE BOYS

by Michael Bane

The first time our illustrious 20 Questions interviewer heard The Oak Ridge Boys, they were singing "Nobody Wants to Play Rhythm Guitar Behind Jesus" at the Exit Inn showcase club in Nashville. The year was 1977 (or so), and the only vocal group in country music was The Staller Brothers. The Oaks, a long-time gospel fixture, were trying to "crossover." Their success is legendary. The Oak Ridge Boys—Joe Bonsall, Duane Allen, Richard Sterban and newest member Steve

Sanders—have set the standard for vocal groups, crossing over not only into country, but pop as well. We caught up with the boys at the Strawberry Festival in Plant City, Florida, where we spent some time on the bus and talked about their new album, baseball, strawberries and 20 Questions, in that order.

1

I do like the new record. It reminds me of that first CBS showcase at the Exit Inn.

Joe: Sure, sure. I remember

that show.

Richard: Back in the dawn of time.

Duane: Before we was even country.

2

A couple of things on this new record sound a little bit like that.

Duane: Taking those kinds of chances, you mean?

Joe: Well, I'll tell you what that is: Every once in a while you need a change. Signing with RCA Records was an exciting thing for us, for psy-

chological reasons. A lot of our favorite acts in the universe, from The Blackwood Brothers to Elvis Presley were on RCA Records. So to sign with RCA, I got to tell you, was a little bit of an emotional thing for us, also.

3

Yeah, that's true.

Joe: Hey, they had a whole new excitement about us, a new belief in us, and we got to do two things on this album that were exciting. One was to work with our old buddy

Ron Chancey. That had a good feeling to it.

Richard: And then to work with a guy like Richard Landis, who is a brand new entry, with new enthusiasm and new ideas. He was able to get us in there and push us a little further.

4

It's a cleaner record than some of the last few.

Joe: We tried not to over-produce it. We tried to do just right. On a lot of our records recently, for example, our last producer didn't like to use things like fiddles or steel guitars or acoustic instruments.

Duane: Yeah, and they were replaced by synthesizer sounds. We're real happy to be getting back to the guts of country music.

5

I like the arrangement of "Walking After Midnight."

Richard: Well, thank you.

Joe: That's kind of a risk, too, when you start dealing with a classic like that.

6

Will it be a single?

Richard: No, probably not.

Joe: It's there for people to find.

7

Your fans will find it.

Steve: If they like it, if they want to hear it as a single, look out.

Joe: We had some good input from our producers on this one, too. Our producers both brought in a lot of material that really turned us on, or that we first went, "Whoa, are you kidding us?" We haven't had that kind of input for a long time.

Richard: Duane's brought in great songs for years. He listens more than anybody. But to have a guy like Landis, with a whole new off-the-wall thing like "Love This Cat"—"Guys, you gotta do 'Love This Cat,'" he says. Well, we heard it and went, "Are you kidding?" He says, "Guys, you gotta do it; I'll fight you if you don't."

8

I was going to ask you about that song. It's good, but definitely weird.

Joe: There's actually three kinds of songs on this album. There's three ballads—any one of the three could single, but the charts are full of that right now. All the hat acts are singing ballads. Then there are three off-the-wall tunes and three straight-ahead, hard-down country songs. We have different vocals featured on each one, enough that every one of us has real good representation on the product. Richard's got a whole lot of play parts.

Richard: Which I haven't had for a while 'cause our old producer, Jimmy Bowen, got away from that.

Duane: Yeah, you were kind of disappearing into the production mix there.

Richard: Different producers have different ideas.

9

The Oaks have 25 years of weight behind them. Does that make you tend to go in the same direction even if you don't mean to?

Duane: It's happened some over the years.

Joe: Yeah, in our long history, I've seen that happen from time to time. But I gotta tell you, we've always been able to pull ourselves out of it.

10

It's true that you guys have ridden right over a lot of trends. Right now, it's the guys in hats.

Steve: Well, I'll tell you, groups are down, guys in hats are up, we're still here...

Richard: We won't go away.

Joe: That's why Duane named the new album *Unstoppable*. It was his idea, and it's a great name for us, because by God, we are.

11

I thought it was funny when, right at the peak of the real group frenzy, when all the state's names were taken...

Duane: Let me tell you a

story about that, Michael. Gerry Wood did a survey right before he left *Billboard*. He said, and I quote, "There are 45 groups now in country music signed to major recording deals." When we started in 1977 there were two, us and The Statlers. You think the hats have increased, take a look at the groups!

12

Well, we can all hammer country radio, because it's still weird...men with hats, folkie girl singers, groups, the loop goes on and on.

Duane: That's good.

Steve: Well, the strong survive.

Joe: One of the things that's helped The Oak Ridge Boys is that we still have a top notch show. We still play the big dates. And people still pack the places to see us.

13

You're still a big Vegas/Tahoe act, right?

Richard: Oh, yeah.

Steve: We just went to Atlantic City, and in four days, we sold out six shows in a row.

Duane: We feel fortunate 'cause we're still rocking on.

14

Are you still touring like crazy people?

Joe: We just went through a light period.

Richard: Yeah, but from the end of June 'til the end of the year, we're hardly home.

Joe: We did about 230 dates last year, about 120 cities, something like that.

15

You know, for an act of your stature, that's a hell of a lot of shows.

Duane: We got a lot of people that like to eat.

Richard: We like to make a good salary ourselves.

Joe: We got to divide it four ways to start with, but there's about 55 people who get theirs before we get ours.

Duane: Heck of it is, we still love getting out there.

Joe: And we gauge it. We have a little saying: "Well, let's go

do this now." So right now, I'm just open to eating and doing the second show tonight, getting a good night's sleep on the bus. I'll take on Sarasota tomorrow.

16

It's kind of like Zen touring?

Richard: Right. Then we rest a little Monday, then we cut a sound track for another motion picture on Tuesday, if it's okay with RCA.

17

And you don't want to jeopardize that relationship, right?

Joe: Well, of course not. Not to digress, but our old label's philosophy was to beat them over the head with product. Everytime we turned around, we were making another album. And then put together another "Greatest Hits" package. And then do this, and then do that. And I got to think these guys—record distributors, radio guys, even fans—are saying, "Well, here's another Oak Ridge Boys album..." There's a difference already.

18

So you go out and play baseball tomorrow?

Joe: Well, we're invited to go work out with the White Sox in the morning if we can get our butts out of the bunk.

19

Steve, have they dragged you into this insanity yet?

Steve: Well...

Joe: We're asking the Strawberry Festival people to book us later in the Festival next time—after the exhibition games have started—so we can see some baseball.

Richard: You know, last year, we got to see the Reds.

Duane: In fact, we sang the National Anthem before their game.

20

(To Steve) You know, it's quite amazing that you can still put up with these guys.

Steve: It's amazing to me that they can put up with me.





Clint Black: A BETTER MAN

Newfound stardom could turn anyone's head, especially if you're a young, handsome bachelor that the women are crazy for. But in Clint Black we see a man whose easygoing manner and basic character keep his feet planted firmly on the ground. ■ by Patrick Carr

Sitting at a table under a tree behind today's auditorium—this one in Florida—Clint Black is talking easily and openly about his family.

He mentions his maternal great-grandfather, a professional violinist and luthier who came to the New World from Sicily; his three older brothers, with whom he used to revel in Saturday night back-porch pickin' parties that wouldn't end till the sheriff came; and of course his parents. His mother and father were always his best friends, he says, and they still are. He calls them from the road a lot, and whenever he gets back into Houston, he goes straight to see them. "Even if it's two in the morning, I'll be there," he says, "and we'll stay up talking till six."

Now, right there, that's a highly significant clue to the basic character of country's favorite short, dark, handsome hat hunk.

Here's another. Observing the very obvious—that in almost all circumstances Clint seems to have an exceptionally easygoing attitude—I ask him if that's how he's always been.

"Yep," he says. "I'm the youngest of four boys, and I recall some psychologist saying that the youngest is the nurtured one, the one of the whole batch of siblings who has the best of it. And I really did. I was able to stand back and watch mistakes being made all around me: my brothers being older and going out there first, doing things and getting caught and getting in trouble, and I'd be watching the punishment, seeing how I could avoid that for myself. And all their

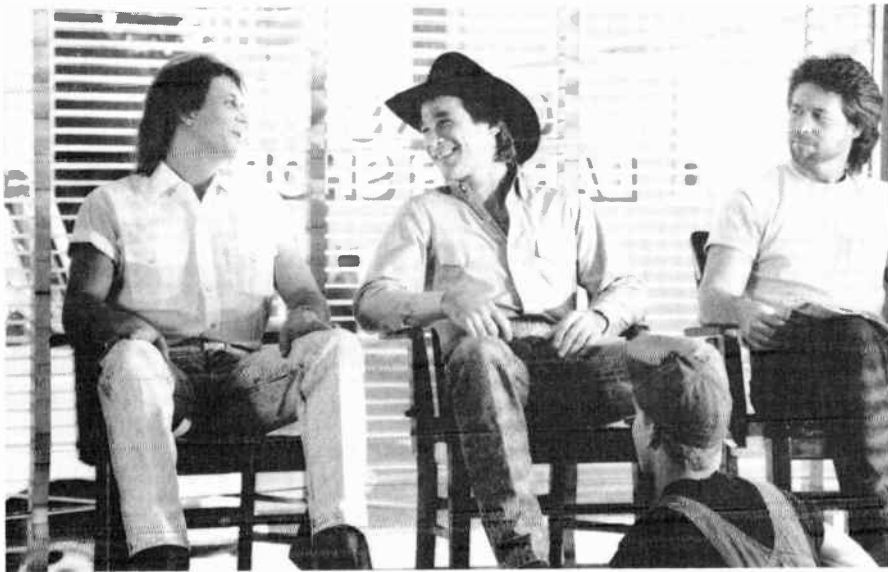
music—you know, they'd go out and get it, acquire it, and I could just hear it—well, just all kind of things like that set me up for being the happy guy with the good point of view."

And really, he does indeed seem happy, and a good point of view is in fact reflected in his behavior. For instance, his very next words following those above are, "Hey! Stop pickin' on that guy, now!" called out to a fellow musician talking casually with road manager Graeme Lagden. There's real good humor in this moment—the easy familiarity of people who really get along together—and it turns out, those elements are typical of Clint's act. During the next few pre-show hours, he's a benign presence all over the hall: by the cargo doors in the lee of an 18-wheeler, trying to extend the life of a running joke he and the other guys are playing on his bodybuilding fiddle player; on stage during Lorrie Morgan's sound check, talking intently with her drummer; in the backstage dining area, popping up over my shoulder and asking, "Food pretty good?"

It's disconcerting, this kind of thing—most stars of Clint's magnitude (and far lesser lights, for that matter) spend most of their road time in royal isolation, insulated from their co-workers almost as effectively as they're protected from their public—but you could get used to Clint's way of doing things. It's good to see a star behaving like just another human when his job isn't actually demanding that he be the center of attention.

It really is unusual, though, and not

JIM MCCOY/RE



Whether making videos with band members Hayden Nicolas and Martin Young, above, or accepting the 1990 Billboard Music Award for the year's top country single and album, Clint does it with ease. Opposite, he's equally at home on the set of *Geraldo*, with labelmates Lorrie Morgan and K.T. Oslin and RCA president, Joe Galante.



surprisingly so: The whole show business system is after all geared to creating and maintaining an enormous gulf between stars and everyone else, and it's not a voluntary system; it operates no matter what any individual star thinks of it. For Clint to act the way he does, then, he must have actually short-circuited the usual processes: bucked the system, so to speak.

That turns out to be the case. "I've had a lot of years to think about this, and I've thought about it quite a bit," Clint explains. "I mean, it's hard for me to look at somebody who's not handling it right, who's being reckless or offending people left and right. It just seems clear to me that the intensities and the rewards and the luxuries and all that stuff that comes with success—the accolades and all these wonderful, glamorous things—all that doesn't change a thing. It doesn't change me. It doesn't make me any better. It might if I accept it, and grow from it and become a better person, but people aren't going to see that part of me.

"I don't know. It seems weird to me that anyone would think success means

they've gotten better. That's the big fear I hear from my fans: that I'm going to change. People are watching my expressions, analyzing my remarks, kind of scrutinizing me."

He laughs ruefully, "It's kind of a frustrating thing and kind of a funny thing, too. I look around, and we all know some cases of people who've really let the star thing go to their heads, and it's surprising. I think that kind of big-headed attitude should be the exception—but it must not be, because people are always waiting for it to happen, you know?"

Oh, yes, I know. I've seen it once or twice myself, and over the course of my years in this game I've also observed a rough equation at work: The sincerity of any given performer's rap on humility varies in inverse proportion to the emotionalism of its delivery, which in turn increases directly with the size of the performer's ego and the sensitivity of my gag reflex.

I'm relieved to be able to report, therefore, that Clint's delivery is very low-key, and my diaphragm doesn't even twitch.

About two hours before showtime, Hayden Nicholas is taking a break in the bus he shares with the other members of Clint Black's band. Actually, the band is as much Hayden's as Clint's. Although Clint stands alone at the vocal mike and in the spotlight, Hayden performs every other important music-making function, including songwriting as half of a duo.

That's how it's worked since 1987 in Houston, when each man found what he needed in the other. Clint connected with an accomplished, locally established musician. Hayden, who comes across as a sober, no-nonsense kind of individual, remembers clearly what he saw in Clint:

"He's always known exactly what he's wanted to do. I think that's the first characteristic I noticed about him. I'd been looking for somebody like that for a long time: somebody that didn't just want to play bars for the rest of his life or maybe have somebody come in and discover him; somebody who really wanted to make it happen and was willing to make it happen himself, to pick up the pieces as he went along and find the different people he had to find. He had a real focus that I find kind of rare."

That focus led young Mr. Black, with Mr. Nicholas in support and demo recordings of some choice Black/Nicholas songs in hand, to Bill Ham, a gentleman whose position as manager of rock-blues raunch monsters ZZ Top made him the biggest wig in the Houston music business. Ham evidently saw in Clint and his songs an item for which he had a hankering, a country act with the goods to go all the way, and so did RCA Records; and barring the details, you know the rest: *Killin' Time*, hot videos, hit singles, sales records, showers of awards, et cetera: big, big success.

According to Hayden Nicholas, the success "was something that to Clint was not a surprise. It kind of takes people aback sometimes, but he has a way of being confident without being arrogant; of knowing that it might not happen this next year, or the year after that, but eventually it will. I mean, he *knew* that. It wasn't a matter of belief."

Clint himself expresses almost exactly those thoughts. "Yep," he says, matter-of-fact. "As far back as I can remember wanting to make it, I thought I would. I looked at it not as some lucky thing that could happen to me, but as a matter of business and method: By just doing certain things, if I did them right, it would happen. I remember thinking to myself, 'It might take me 20 years, or 30 or 40, and I might even die before I get there, but'"—and here he narrows his eyes, extends his right hand in front of his face and squints along it as if sighting straight down the centerline of the highway to the bigtime—"but *that's* where

"I didn't know what it entailed and what it would be, and what kind of luxuries I'd be afforded, but I had it set in my mind for so many years that my bags were packed, and whatever it took, I was gonna do it."

I'm headed."

And now of course, just ten years after he went full-time as a musician at the age of 19, abandoning a boy's dream of a future in NASA and a wage-earning reality in ironworking and security services salesmanship, *that* is where he is.

So now he's there, how is it? How, for instance, are the radical changes stardom brings into a person's life: losing your privacy, becoming a bus-living gypsy? How's he handling it?

He laughs. "Well, like I said, I have big phone bills. I call home a lot, talk to Mom and Dad.

"But really, it's not that tough. The first year was a lot tougher. The shows weren't as well spaced—we were having to grab up whatever we could find—and the amount of press and stuff I was doing each day was much greater. This year we've been able to be a lot more selective, and we have all these greater luxuries, like three buses instead of one, so it's hard to say it's that tough. Sure, the traveling wears on you, all the little aggravations you run into with hotels and stuff, and it's tough adapting to sleeping on the bus. I'm usually adapted just about the time the tour ends."

Many performers visited with sudden stardom seem shell-shocked: simply blown away by the intensity of their new schedule because they had no idea, or all the wrong ideas, of what it would be like. Not Clint.

"I didn't have any misconceptions. I knew it was gonna be tough. I didn't know what it entailed and what it would be, and what kind of luxuries I'd be afforded, but I had it set in my mind for so many years that my bags were packed, and whatever it took, I was gonna do it.

"The big help to me was having people to tell me what my job is. When you're working the clubs, see, you have to wear all these different hats, but when you get to the next level of things, you don't know which hat you're really supposed to wear—how much involvement you're supposed to have, in what areas. So having a manager like Bill Ham who can tell me 'this is the artist's job; this isn't' has made all the difference in the world."

Clint's job is not, however, all plain sailing on a well-charted sea, experi-

enced navigators notwithstanding. When I ask him how he's handling the *really* rough road stuff, the sheer craziness that happens between the public and its stars, he seems to know what I'm talking about.

"I guess mine is like any business where you meet a lot of people," he says. "You're going to see the best and the worst. You're going to see every extreme, every kind of person there is. And that's shocking. That's shocking to me.

"I mean, I feel like I've been exposed to a lot of life through other people's songs, because I've studied them and analyzed them so closely, and I've gained insight through that—but there's nothing like the real thing. You know, the things that people—their small cruelties, and their generousities, it's one extreme to another.

"That's the whirlwind. It's emotions. It isn't so much going here, then getting on a plane and going there and doing that, and then doing all *that*: It's the emotions of learning things about people, learning things about yourself. I mean, the things that people do who are

fanatics are just, just quite *extreme*, and yet you've got to stop and think about it and try and rationalize it and analyze it and figure out what it means to you and what it means to them. *That's* the whirlwind."

Yeah, I remark, people's emotions can indeed get pretty seriously out of hand when their stars appear before them in the flesh.

"Well, yes, what's going on is something much bigger in their minds than what it really is. That's where the confusion is, or the frustration. With me, a lot of times, if somebody would just relax, I could spend some time around them. But they can't relax. In their eyes I'm a much bigger thing than I really am, and their intensity level...Even people I've known for years, their intensity level over all this is such that it's just draining. I can't be around them. I have to go, 'See ya. Relax. Talk to ya later.' That's the running away that some people mistake for somebody getting too big for their britches or letting it all go to their head."

He smiles with a kind of regret. "So my intensities have been many over the



"I'm like an artist who's been finding a rock here and there and painting on it, or even just imagining his pictures, and suddenly he's been given the finest canvas money can buy, and he's got all of it he wants. That's when it's time to really start painting."

last couple of years, with all the shows and all the awards and all the crowds. I get around my parents these days, and sometimes they think I'm just real tired. I tell 'em I'm not, I'm just a much more relaxed person than I used to be. Out of necessity."

So much for the irritants, problems and ironies of stardom. How about the good stuff? Here comes the grin that wins, that great big Clint Black smile, every dimple and wrinkle of it just like the videos. "Well,

for my family now. The security we've got from that, or at least we *feel* we've got, is tremendous.

"Then there's having a great band, and being able to have great gear, and great staff, and to sound the way we want to sound in the house and hear what we want to hear on the stage; and have buses to where 20 or 30 of us, or however many we grow to, can live comfortable through the eight or ten months or however long we spend on the road.

"And the people. I can work with, and get to know, people who are the tops in

and Little Feat over in Mobile. Now, that's the kind of stuff where I could say, 'Okay, if I lost my legs and arms tomorrow and had to lay in a bed the rest of my life, I've got some great memories.'"

He laughs. "When you think that way, it all becomes real clear. And then, when some crummy shower in some little motel scalds you four or five times in the course of a shower, which is a major aggravation on the road when it happens to you two or three times a week, that stuff *will* become menial."

One more aspect of the rewards of stardom: the women. I broach the subject by repeating a story told to me by Russ Barnard, *Country Music's* publisher. He and Clint were in a New York restaurant when a very beautiful woman passed by their table, and, recognizing Clint, gave him a very friendly look. "Ah," Clint quipped. "To be famous and single."

He laughs at that. "The one I thought you were going to say was, 'She'd be real good to have as a fan.' I like that one. You see, sometimes it's nice to be *not* famous: to be somewhere where I'm not known, and I can watch more than be watched. I've found that to be the vantage point, really.

"But, yeah, it *is* nice to be famous and single. It's nice to be single, period."

Really?

"Yeah. I could have made some mistakes early on. About two years ago, when 30 seemed like a safe number, I said, 'A person has to be at least 30 years old before they understand themselves well enough to cohabit with someone else.' That was a pretty good excuse at the time, but now I'm nearing 30, I don't know. I might have to adjust that number some."

Hmm. Not being up on the latest *Enquirer* headlines (has Clint even made the *Enquirer* yet?), I have to investigate the context of that last remark. Does Clint have a steady girlfriend these days?

"No. Nothing I can brag on," he says. "I'd like to say that I had a steady, but I don't. There's someone that I date when I get back to Houston, which is about two or three days a month, on the average, but it's noncommittal, more of a friendship kind of thing.

"And, y'know, that could change too.



Clint's horse, Summit, a gift from The Summit performance hall in Houston, and his dog, Cole, a Christmas gift from his parents, are part of his entourage.

y'know," he drawls happily, "the truth of the matter is, it's a whole lot better than I thought it would be. I'd prepared myself for this semi-miserable life, with these crazy schedules and confinements, and it's really not that bad. And the upsides and the luxuries that come with it are so great."

Upsides? Luxuries? Pray tell.

"The money's great. The money has allowed me for the first time in my life not to be concerned with that part of my life. Working in clubs, I was always behind on some payment, and that was always a big worry. My car was in threat of being repossessed quite a bit, or if it wasn't, it was because I'd paid the bill instead of fixing the alternator, so it was sitting on the lot anyway.

"So things like that. Things I can do

their field. In the clubs, the people you're working with who are the tops in their fields are the top bartenders or great club managers—which is real nice, but the focus is on something which I didn't want to be doing anyway, which is selling alcohol: getting people in there and tanked up. That was the business.

"Now, the top people I'm working with are engineers and tour managers and video people and guitar technicians and just all sorts of real professionals. It's a luxury. I hate to sound corny, but I mean it: It's a real privilege. Very few people who do what I do get to have all these great people working for them.

"And you know, I've been able to talk to guys like Jim Messina; talk with him about the music, his songs and my songs. Jimmy Buffett—I did a show with him

Last year I mentioned that I had a number I didn't have to look into my phone book to call, but as soon as I said that, it was—whoosh."

I allow as how it must be difficult to maintain any kind of romance when your life is lived on a bus. He agrees.

"I don't put myself in a position to believe that anybody is going to be able to deal with it. The girl I was seeing for so many years, I used to ask her, 'If all my dreams and ambitions came true tomorrow, do you think you could handle it?'"

"She said undeniably, yes, there was no question in her mind—but I couldn't say that. I used to argue with her, tell her I didn't know, with all my conviction and devotion and ambitions, if I could handle it. I only knew I was gonna try."

That relationship is in the past, though, and now Clint has to admit that "it's a far cry from dating someone steady, thinking about whether I could handle it. I wish for a steady thing, though. I always have. I'm the steady type."

He sighs. "It's really hard to watch my brothers raising their families. That's the hard part: kids. Because even if I do find somebody and get married, then I still have the tough thing of probably missing six months out of every year of my kids' lives."

I venture an idea: If he's on the road half the time, but really *home* when he's home, that might in fact be a better arrangement than the usual nine-to-five job, dad-comes-home-tired setup.

"Well, barely," he says. "Maybe just barely. But I don't believe in that coming home and being too tired thing. I know you get tired, but I have a different philosophy about kids. I watch my brothers. Their children are their best friends. *My* parents are *my* best friends."

Okay, I say, how about this? In five years' time, he probably won't be working near as much as he is now.

"I probably will be, at something. It may not be touring ten months out of the year. It may be touring six months out of the year and working a lot more time in the studio. That's the direction I'd go: I'd pull back from touring only to use the time in the studio. I'd live *there*."

"I know myself, you see. I'm like an artist who's been finding a rock here and there and painting on it, or even just imagining his pictures, and suddenly he's been given the finest canvas money can buy, and he's got all of it he wants. That's when it's time to really start painting."

Showtime. It's the usual hunkytank arrangement, a handsome, clean-cut cowboy down there in the lights singing songs about love while up in the seats the old-guard fans try to concentrate on the music, not the youngish women going giddy all around

them. Sometimes at a Clint Black show (or a Randy Travis show, or a Ricky Van Shelton or Alan Jackson or George Strait or other hunkytank's show) you can lose your bearings pretty easily: It sounds like someone spliced a 1989 George Michael audience track onto a 1962 George Jones concert.

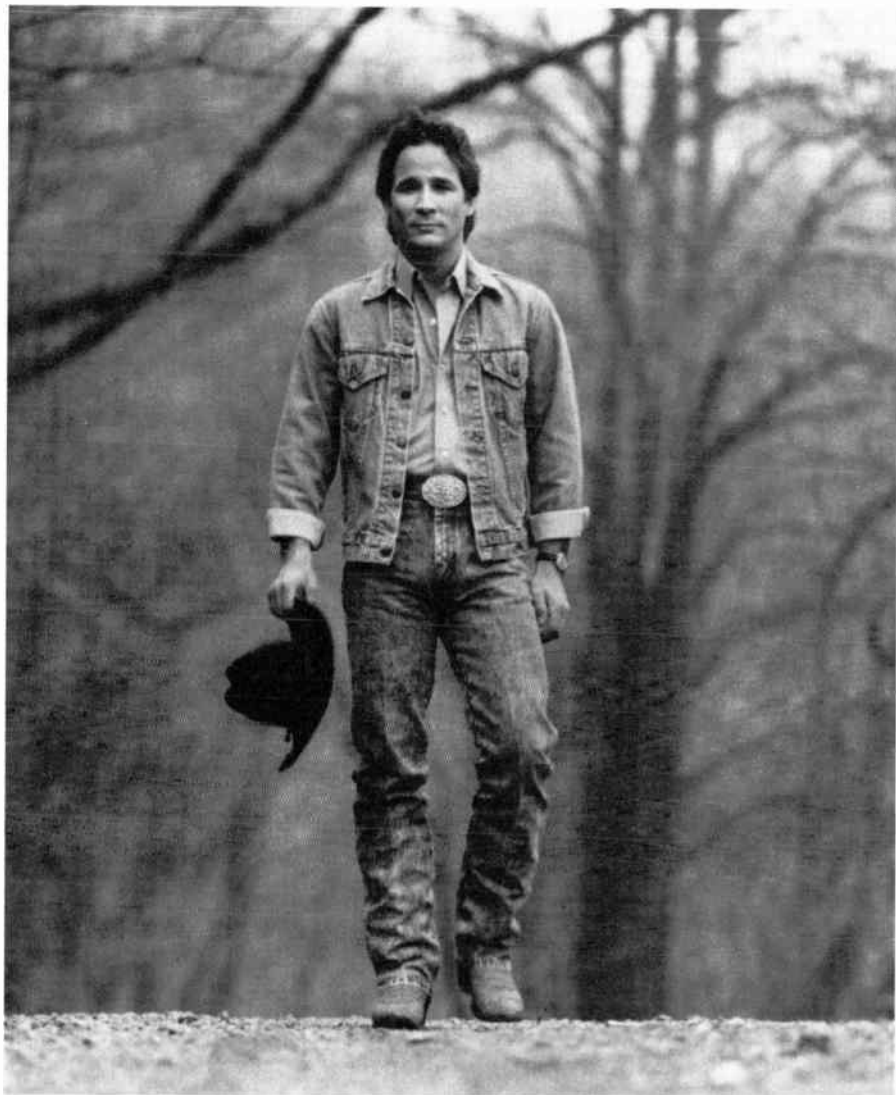
That's how it is now, except that most Black/Nicholas songs don't sound like Jones material; their stylistic roots draw nourishment from 1970's pop—Loggins & Messina, Jim Croce, Jimmy Buffett, The Doobie Brothers, Bob Seger, the stuff Clint grew up listening to—more than straight country or rockabilly. The exceptions, interestingly enough are the big hits: "Killin' Time," "A Better Man," "Put Yourself in My Shoes." Every one of those is a smart, convincing, classically artful, lost-love jerker in a tight country frame.

Listening to Clint put across the basically bleak messages in those songs and watching a significant portion of his audience hoot and squeal and shake and shimmy—truly impressive new heights of hormonally activated obliviousness

being achieved here; it must be the videos—I find myself getting concerned. For some reason I find myself thinking about the fears Clint expressed about missing out on family life, and I remember something Merle Haggard told me three or four years ago as *he* burned up Florida daylight before going out and giving himself to his public.

Merle said that he had in fact done what Clint fears: He had let his children grow up without him while he followed his Muse, and now it was just plain too late to do anything about that, either for them or for him. That knowledge, he said, looking straight at me, was the saddest thing he had to deal with. His eyes scared me.

Merle and Clint are very different men, though. Merle is hardly "the nurtured one" or "the happy guy with the good point of view," and it's difficult to imagine Clint (with or without Hayden Nicholas) writing songs that reflect a case of the real-life blues anywhere near as deep-seated as Merle's. I figure that Clint's future will probably be thoughtful, but just fine. ■



WEBB PIERCE: 1921-1991

Country Music Loses a Legend

It was no secret in Nashville that Webb Pierce was seriously ill with pancreatic cancer. (Though he'd had health problems for several years previous), he fought this normally swift-moving disease and cheered everyone by rallying back last summer. His battle was characteristic of the man: uncompromising, tough and unafraid of a fight. Sadly, on Sunday morning, February 24th, heart failure brought on by the disease ended his struggle. Webb was 69.

Webb helped set the standards—and style—for the entire generation of singers who followed in the wake of Hank Williams. His sequin-spangled Nudie suits, fancier than anything Hank wore, his famous \$100,000 Pontiac with the steer horns, inlaid silver dollars and tooled leather seats, his legendary guitar-shaped swimming pool, his patent leather hair and raw singing all combined to make him the epitome of the successful 1950's country singer.

But he wasn't all flash. Those gaudy trappings draped one of the most distinctive voices of any era, a voice with keening intensity and raw power that never aspired to polish or phony sophistication. Its emotion and straight-arrow sincerity gave anguished ballads like "There Stands the Glass" or "Back Street Affair" the tone of pure torment needed to make them real. Self-confident, flip-pant numbers like "In the Jailhouse Now" and "I'm Walking the Dog" were just a little cockier the way Webb put them across. Even today, more than three decades later, the records that established his formidable reputation retain their power and rough-hewn beauty.

Obviously, the public felt as I do. On Joel Whitburn's list of Top 200 best-selling country performers, Webb comes in at Number Seven, just ahead of Willie Nelson, and just behind Ray Price. Of 97 Pierce singles on the Billboard charts (seven of them duets), 46 were Top Ten, 12 of them Number Ones. Today's Number One records rarely remain at the top more than a couple of weeks; Webb's 1955 version of Jimmie Rodgers' "In the

Jailhouse Now" stood at Number One an unheard-of *21 weeks—nearly half a year!*

Webb never fit the stereotype of the naive Southern kid with a guitar, a voice and a dream. Born in West Monroe, Louisiana, in 1921, he grew up addicted to Gene Autry's music and sang on a station in nearby Monroe. Following Army service in World War II, he moved to Shreveport and managed the menswear



section of the local Sears. The experience helped give him a businessman's viewpoint.

His early regional hits for Four Star Records in 1949 and 1950 helped him land a spot on Shreveport radio station KWKH's *Louisiana Hayride*. Webb's own Pacemaker label, which he founded in Shreveport during that period, recorded fellow *Hayride* artists Faron Young and The Wilburn Brothers before anyone but *Hayride* fans knew them.

By the time he joined Decca in 1951, Pierce was a regional star. In 1952, with two Number One records under his belt, he left the *Hayride*, just as Hank Williams had in 1949, for the Opry. For the next several years, his records dominated the scene. He was so influential that one of his biggest hits, "Slowly," which featured Bud Isaacs'

pedal steel guitar, single-handedly prompted musicians to quit using the older, non-pedal "lap" steels in favor of the more versatile pedal guitars.

At this point, Webb's business sense inspired him to make a smart move. Like Roy Acuff, he co-founded a major song publishing firm in Nashville: Cedarwood Music. When he started recording songs like "Tupelo County Jail" and "I Ain't Never," penned by an obscure Florida singer-songwriter, he signed the songwriter—Mel Tillis—to Cedarwood and helped create another star.

By the early 70's, though he remained a popular performer, his hitmaking days seemed over. At this point he and two other superstars, Kitty Wells and Ernest Tubb, all labelmates at Decca, parted ways with the company, now known as MCA. Nevertheless, Webb remained in the headlines, hosting bus tours of his home (and the guitar-shaped pool), eventually drawing complaints from neighbors, including Ray Stevens. Once again, his business sense kicked in. Legally barred from conducting home tours, he built an identical pool on Music Row for the tourist trade. Musically speaking, aside from a couple of minor hits for Plantation Records, his time had passed.

Or had it? Gail Davies' first-ever hit was a 1978 remake of Webb's "No Love Have I." And 1982 marked a bit of a Pierce revival. Loretta Lynn cut "There Stands the Glass," and Ricky Skaggs had a hit with "I Don't Care." That same year Webb and longtime admirer Willie Nelson recorded *In the Jailhouse Now*, an album featuring both men singing duet versions of Webb's hits. But his active career was winding down. Health problems and weariness of the road led him to quit performing. Financially comfortable, he could relax at home with his wife, Audrey. Former guitarist Max Powell remained his right-hand man.

In 1990 Webb was nominated for induction into the Country Music Hall of Fame. He lost out to the worthy Tennessee Ernie Ford. There's little doubt he'll make it this year, though it's sad that under the circumstances, both men couldn't have been inducted at the same time. Webb deserved to see it happen.

—RICH KIENZLE

Newsletter

REVIEWS & FEATURES

In Good Hands

Good news to report in several categories. First of all, we continue to receive good material from you members, enough to sustain all our many sections, plus Rich Kienzle's fine Legends features. This time see his retrospective on Tennessee Ernie Ford. Don't forget we'd like to receive record reviews, including reviews of singles or albums on independent labels.

The Collections page has come back nicely after being closed down. Every item printed there was submitted with a valid magazine label and/or valid membership number. We reserve

the right to print an occasional piece by non-members in Reviews & Features and Readers Create, but basically our hearts belong to you.

George Fletcher, the Assistant to the Publisher, who came to us last June, has been bearing more and more of the load of preparing the *Newsletter*. He's doing an outstanding job.

We are grateful for the outcome of the war in the Gulf and thankful for the spring. See you at Fan Fair 1991. Look for our CMSA booth.

Johnny Cash at Wounded Knee

John Smith, a resident of Des Moines, Iowa, and writer of a discography on Johnny Cash, sent us in his write-up of a trip he made with Cash almost 25 years ago to view the site of the Wounded Knee Massacre. Smith notes that 1990 marked the 100th Anniversary of Wounded Knee. We sat together, Johnny Cash and I, in his dressing room backstage at the old KRNT Radio Theater in Des Moines, Iowa, in late 1967. We talked about a lot of things that evening. But mostly we talked about Indians. John knew of my interest in the Plains Indians and had expressed a desire to travel with me to South Dakota. Eventually, we got around to discussing Wounded Knee and the happenings of that tragic December 29, 1890. But before we could go much further, he was called back to the stage. I received a letter from him the next week, hoping that we could soon make that trip to South Dakota and Wounded Knee.

Then, in late 1969, I received a telegram from Sol Holiff, John's manager at the time, saying that they were filming a documentary on John for public television and that John wanted to do a benefit show on one of the South Dakota Indian reservations—and perhaps work in that trip to Wounded Knee. In December, a film crew and the Johnny Cash troupe descended on the small village of St. Francis Mission on the Rosebud Reservation in south-central South Dakota.

The next day we drove over to the Pine Ridge Reservation and the community of Wounded Knee. I had been there before, but as our caravan drove into the valley



JOHN L. SMITH

Touring Wounded Knee in 1969—Johnny Cash, Edgar Red Cloud and Robert Holy Dance at the marker of the mass grave.

of Wounded Knee, it all seemed new again. The trading post and the museum had not changed much over the years. And up the hill beyond the buildings stood the white frame Catholic Church whose cemetery was the site of the mass grave.

We were met by a delegation from the Oglala Lakota tribe, among them Edgar Red Cloud, a direct descendant of Chief Red Cloud, and William Horn Cloud, the tribal historian. Horn Cloud had lost several ancestors at Wounded Knee. Before touring the battlefield, we were taken inside the trading post. John asked if anyone had seen the benefit show the night before, but because of the distance, no one present had made the trip. When the trading post manager produced a battered old guitar, Johnny and June—both of whom had performed before presidents and royalty all over the world—gave a personal concert in this remote village.

Along the way up "cemetery hill," we saw markers set up where the cavalry units had camped. Horn Cloud pointed out the site of the Indian camp. As we climbed, we discussed the background of the battle. A Miniconjou Lakota chief named Big Foot had led his people down to the Badlands section of the Pine Ridge Reservation, intending to join the Lakota encamped there. But Big Foot had taken ill, and units of the Seventh United States Cavalry, well-known for their action at Little Big Horn in 1876, were frantically searching for him in order to prevent his tribe from joining the hostiles. They found him and brought him to Wounded Knee, where his people were to be disarmed and dismounted before being taken to the agency at Pine Ridge.

History has many theories as to what, or who, started the shooting on that fateful December 29, 1890, but when the smoke cleared, over 300 men, women and children, including Big Foot himself, were

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- Notes From Our Mailbag
- Collections

dead. A northern plains blizzard covered the area with snow and bitterly cold temperatures before any of the bodies could be located and buried. Many were later found frozen and were simply placed in the mass grave.

Horn Cloud was very precise in showing us the routes, hills, ravines and trenches where his ancestors had fallen. When we approached the mass grave, with its stone marker listing the names of those killed, Johnny was very silent and just stood and read and listened.

Finally, it was time to leave. I took Johnny and June to the Rapid City Airport, and we talked from time to time, but mostly there was silence. At times John would ask me about a certain part of the battle and write something down on a piece of paper, then return it to his coat pocket. Once we arrived at the airport, Johnny told June and me that he had written a song about Wounded Knee, and with only his hand keeping time on his knee, he sang "Big Foot."

The benefit concert, the tour of Wounded Knee and the song were included in the PBS special entitled *Cash*, which first aired in March 1970. On June 5, 1972, John went into the recording studio at the House of Cash complex in Hendersonville, Tennessee, and recorded "Big Foot." It was released on his *America* album in July of that year. December 29, 1990, marked the 100th anniversary of the Wounded Knee Massacre. The trading post, museum and Catholic Church are gone now, removed or destroyed during the Wounded Knee II Occupation of 1973. But the grave is still there, and Johnny Cash got his wish.

John Smith
Des Moines, Iowa



Brian Kelleher with his N.H. Country Music Association award for Record of the Year.

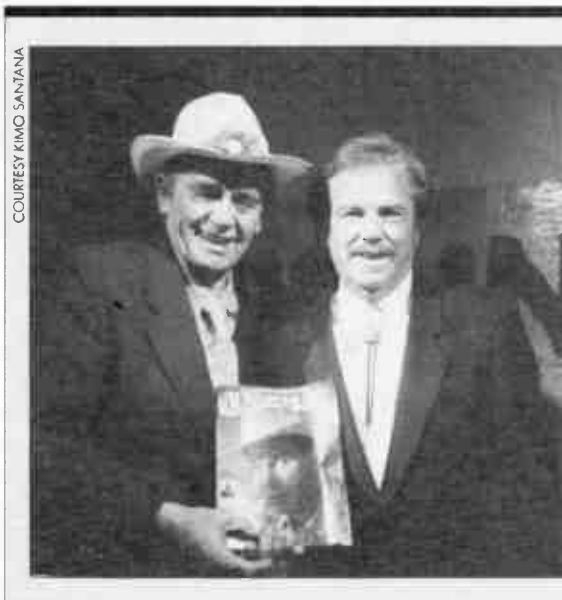
Are You Ready For This One?

One of the more interesting local records to run across my desk lately is a cassette single by The Tennessee Saints, entitled "I'd Rather Lose You to a Woman Than Lose You to Another Man." The song on the other side is "I Like Kinky Women." Despite the risque-sounding titles, the songs are clearly done tongue-in-cheek and are quite funny. "I'd Rather Lose You" is a country-rocker with a storyline that, well, matches the title. And "Kinky Women" is straight country. But it's the lyrics of both songs, which twist around often-used cliches, that set these numbers apart. Note these lines from "I'd Rather Lose You," where the husband finds out-of-the-ordinary evidence of his wife's cheating: "Lipstick on your blouse and you're not wearing any/Midnight calls from a girl named Penny/High-heeled shoes on my side of the bed/Someone left their earring where I lay my head."

Also of note is the "buzz" the cassette is creating—"I'd Rather Lose You" is getting airplay on local radio stations across the country and won the trophy for Record of the Year from the New Hampshire Country Music Association back in November. More recently it took the Record of the Year prize from the Colony States (Northeast and New England) Regional Awards Show of the Country Music Associations of America.

Brian Kelleher, keyboard player for The Saints, writer of the songs and author of aviation fiction (under the pen name Mack Maloney), splits his time between Newburyport, a small Massachusetts town on the New Hampshire border, and the upstate New York community of Saratoga Springs. "Don't take it seriously...There was a light-hearted sense of humor about both songs," he told *The Saratogian*, a local newspaper. Kelleher says that the rest of the songs The Saints are working on are not nearly as risque, and adds that agents from some of the major labels have contacted them. "Maybe now we'll think about The Saints more seriously," quips Kelleher.

—George Fletcher



Cliffie Stone in Bear Country

When Cliffie Stone appeared on Gene Bear's California television show, *Bear Country*, he was in for a surprise—an advance look at the January/February issue of *Country Music Magazine*, which featured Rich Kienzle's Legends article on Cliffie in the *Newsletter*. During the show, Gene brought out the article. Thanks to Gene for presenting the copies to Cliffie and sending us the photos. See the March/April *Newsletter* for a profile on "The Bear."

MARCH 1991 POLL

Album and Single of the Month

Clint Black	<i>Killin' Time</i>
Alan Jackson "Chasin' That Neon Rainbow"	
Clint Black's debut album, <i>Killin' Time</i> ,	
reclaims the top spot once again. He's followed by Garth Brooks with <i>No Fences</i> . George Strait's <i>Livin' It Up</i> takes third. Vince Gill and Ricky Van Shelton nail down fourth and fifth, respectively. In singles, Alan Jackson takes top honors for the second month in a row with "Chasin' That Neon Rainbow." He's followed by Strait's "I've Come to Expect it From You," with Reba McEntire and "Rumor Has It" in third. Rounding out the top five are Garth Brooks with "Unanswered Prayers" (in fourth for the second time in a row) and Vince Gill's "Never Knew Lonely."	

Don't forget to cast your vote in the May poll! Look for it on the For CMSA Members Only page.

Notes From Our Mailbag...

FLORIDA COUNTRY MUSIC ASSOCIATION
Leo and Bettye Haas, the President and Secretary, respectively, of the Florida Country Music Association (FCMA), saw our feature on New England's various country music organizations, and decided to check in. Readers will remember that the FCMA was the first regional organization profiled in the CMSA Newsletter—back in November/December 1989.



A few lines to let you know the Florida Country Music Association is still going strong. As a matter of fact, we are getting more chapters set up, bringing the total number of chapters to seven—Naples, Ft. Myers, Port Charlotte, Tampa, Lakeland, Orlando and LaBelle.

We now have a Hall of Fame Museum. It's a semi-trailer with its home base at the Lee Civic Center in Ft. Myers. The 1990 Awards Show and State Showcase were held there as well.

Well, just thought we'd drop a few lines to keep in touch.

Keep up the good news!

Leo and Bettye Haas
 Naples, Florida

ROSE MADDOX RECALLED

Member L.C. Bailey recalls seeing many of the country music greats covered in the Newsletter when he was a child in California attending the Town Hall Party country TV show.

I really enjoyed the update on Rose Maddox in the November/December CMSA Newsletter. When I read the story, I ran back in time in my mind. I was perhaps 10 or 11 years old, and my family lived in the town of Banning, California. It was a treat in those days to make a trip every weekend to Compton to see a country music show called *Town Hall Party*. It was there, in 1956 or '57, that I first heard of The Maddox Brothers and Rose.

But then I went through a few years with rock 'n' roll, and turned back to country in my older years. I've often wondered what happened to the acts I knew back then—Rose Maddox, Joe and Rose Lee Maphis, Merle Travis, Johnny Bond and a lot of others. I've also signed on as a member of The Academy, so perhaps in time I'll catch up with more of these stars of yesteryear. At any rate, I've sure enjoyed being a subscriber to *Country Music Magazine*. Keep up the good work!

L.C. Bailey
 Beebe, Arkansas



Faron Young Visits Red Barn Opry
Our Council Bluffs, Iowa, correspondent, Dennis Devine, checks in once again with some notes and photos on Faron Young at Omaha's Red Barn Opry.

Faron Young is one of country music's living legends. He's had many hit records in his more than 30 years in the business. When he walked onto the Red Barn Opry's stage on October 6th, the crowd came to their feet. From "Hello Walls," to "Four O'Clock in the Morning," to the hit Faron and Marvin Rainwater co-wrote, "I Miss



Faron Young performs, and takes time out for everyone's favorite magazine, plus a visit with fans—Dennis Devine's sister, Jean Rymann, and granddaughter, Amanda Mae Devine.

"You Already and You Aren't Even Gone," Faron pleased the crowd.

After the show I got to talk to Faron, and took some pictures with him. He is a very friendly person and says "hello" to all of his fans who are reading this.

Dennis Devine
 Council Bluffs, Iowa



Hats Off to Bill Fuller

Member Bill Fuller of Beaumont, Texas, presents a portion of the country music section of his baseball cap collection. To date, Bill has 12,750 caps. They're displayed on shelves throughout several rooms of his house and in a storage shed. Says Bill, "I'm still collecting caps, and if I run out of space, I'll just have to get another storage building." Bill's collection has been written up in his local paper.

Collecting the Magazine

Complete your collection of *Country Music Magazine*.

● For Sale: *Country Music Magazine* back issues. 1991: Jan/Feb. 1990: May/ Jun, Jul/Aug, Sep/Oct, Nov/Dec. 1989: Jan/Feb, Mar/Apr, Jul/Aug. 1988: Sep/ Oct, Nov/Dec. 1987: Jan/Feb. 1985: Nov/ Dec. \$2.50 per issue, plus \$1.50 postage. Juanita V. Allen, Rte. 1 Box 175, Hinton, WV 25951.

Information, Please

Members write each other directly about information and items they need. Please include a SASE if you must correspond.

● I'm looking for any information pertaining to records cut by Brother Dave Gardner. Will pay for tapes or LPs. Charles Caler, 2625 45th Ave., Brandenton, FL 34207.

● Wanted: Tammy Wynette and Reba McEntire VHS recordings, interviews, specials, awards shows, *Nashville Now*, etc. Will send blank tape and something to cover time and trouble. Also looking for the movie, *Misty of Chincoteague*. Harve D. Stroup, Rte. 2 Box 33, Bloomfield, MO 63825.

● Wanted: *Video P.M.* and *Crook and Chase* coverage of The Judds' break-up announcement. Please help this fan replace her copy that was recorded over! Will pay top dollar for VHS tape. Also, anything else on this duo—magazine articles, photos, promotional items, TV appearances, awards shows, pictures or negatives, etc. List items and prices. Have some articles on others for trade. Lisa Dowell, Box 391, Lavinia, GA 30553.

● For Sale: country LPs, EPs and 45s, including radio and promo copies. I specialize in Johnny Cash recordings. Please specify wants and include SASE. Paul Neil Anderson, 7411 Walmer Ln., Overland Park, KS 66204.

● Would like to hear from country music fans who've performed on or can remember listening to *The Sagebrush Round-Up* out of Fairmont, WV. It was on the air from 1938 to 1952. Jim and Barbara Thornburg, 518 Davis Dr., Morgantown, WV 26505.

● I'm looking for cassette copies of the following albums: *Coat of Many Colors* by Dolly Parton and *JD* by John Denver. Also looking for gospel songs by Dolly Parton (other than "Golden Streets of Glory") and the following Christmas songs: "Holly Jolly Christmas" by Burl Ives and "Santa Claus is Polish" by Bobby Vinton. I will send cassette tape and postage cost. Thank you for any help you can give. Rosemarie Hayton, 70 White Rd., Meriden, CT 06450.

● I would like to know if anyone has an address for Jett Williams (daughter of the late, great Hank Williams Sr.). Also, does anyone know if she has any cassettes for sale? Thanks for your help. Nellie Erickson, Rte. 2 Box 96A, Greenbush, MN 56726.

● I'm interested in trading 3x5 or 4x6 photos of country stars. Favorites are Ricky Van Shelton, Clint Black, Darlene Austin, Janie Frickie, George Strait and Holly Dunn. Like the legends, too! Linda Hendrixson, 212 Delia Ave., Minneapolis, KS 67467.

● Wanted: "Mother of a Honky Tonk Girl"

by Jim Reeves. Will take a duplicate of the song on cassette. Will pay reasonable price. Rose Meis, Box 31, Catherine, KS 67627.

● Wanted: VHS tape of Alabama's first TV special, *Alabama and Friends* (with Hank Jr., Waylon and The Oaks); plus appearances by Alabama on *Dolly* and the 1990 ACM Awards Show. Also, cassette of Bob Kingsley's radio special, "A Decade of Alabama," fan club newsletters prior to October '84, any early TV appearances. Will pay or exchange. Debbie Potts, Rte. 1 Box 216, Woodleaf, NC 27054.

● I collect 8x10 photos of country singers. I need David Frizzell, Lefty Frizzell, Tex Ritter, David Houston. Can anyone help me? Florence Nutbrown, P.O. Box 152, Danville, Quebec, CANADA JOA 1A0.

● I'm interested in obtaining 45s and cassette singles of Sawyer Brown. Will pay reasonable price. Also interested in other Sawyer Brown items. Renee Smith, Rte. 14 Box 267, Greeneville, TN 37743.

For Members Only

The Collections page is for CMSA members only. Every item here was accompanied by a valid magazine label or membership number.

● Wanted: photos, news clippings and anything else on The Oak Ridge Boys (especially 1987-present). Will trade on other stars, or copies of my Oaks stuff, or buy. Kristine Mayeda, 5708 Fresno Ave., Richmond, CA 94804.

● I'm the wife of a soldier stationed in the Middle East. Looking for videotapes of TNN and CMT, as I live in Germany and cable is not available. Also, does anyone have a copy of George Strait's TNN special from last summer? I'd be happy to pay for a copy. Joy Gerbode, HHC 3rd BDE Box 13, APO New York, NY 09162.

● I'm trying to locate two old, rare Waylon Jennings albums to complete my collection: *Waylon Live at JD's* (Sound LTD 100) and *Waylon Music* (PL 43166—a European recording). Plus, does anyone know if "Moonrunners" was ever recorded by Waylon? Sandy Shoultz, 720 Pearce Way, Bowling Green, KY 42101.

Pen Pals

Meet new friends by mail.

● Hi. I'm a Ronnie Milsap fan. My name is Caroline, and I'd love to correspond with some other Ronnie fans who think he's the best thing that ever happened to music. Caroline McArdle, 131 Sugar Creek Ln., Smyrna, TN 37167.

● I'm a 62-year-old man who loves country music. I love to listen to Hank Williams Sr. and Patsy Cline along with a host of other greats. Interests are fishing, hunting and camping. Would like to hear from other country music fans. James F. Hattell Jr., 1955 Arapahoe Apt. 502, Denver, CO 80202.

● I'm a country music fan whose favorites are Reba McEntire, Clint Black, Alan Jackson and others. Hobbies are going to concerts, watching TNN and CMT. Please write, and I'll answer all letters. John Crawford, 1169 Woodland Cir.,

Lawrenceville, GA 30243-3746.

● Hi! I'm a single, 40-year-old female who wishes to correspond with fans of Chris LeDoux. Other favorites are Garth Brooks and Reba McEntire. If you're a single, real-life cowboy or rancher, I'd love to hear from you. Sorry, no inmates, chain, religious or junk mail, please! Vicki L. Siegrist, 3939 Russell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63110-3709.

● I am 47 years old and an auditor/accountant. I would like to correspond with country and western fans who have an interest in auditing, Tandy computers and the music of Sheb Wooley/Ben Colder. Would like to find Sheb Wooley recordings from the late 1960's and 70's. Hobbies include reading and crafts. Favorites also include George Strait and Ricky Van Shelton. Please, no men or prisoners. Mrs. Edward (Nancy) Chitty, 21225 Hwy P, Weston, MO 64098.

● Hello out there! I'm a widow, 63, who loves country music. I like most of the old singers, some of the new (Ricky Van Shelton, George Strait and Vern Gosdin, to name a few). Would like to hear from you older men. I like to dance, take short trips, read and write letters. Send photo, and I'll do the same. Micky M. Roley, 4089 N. First Ave., San Bernardino, CA 92407.

● Hello! I'm a 24-year-old who enjoys country music. Absolute favorite is Kenny Rogers. I enjoy the outdoors, writing and animals. Looking for pen pals male or female. Will answer all. No inmates, please. Rhoda Landers, P.O. Box 353, Selah, WA 98942.

● I'm a 28-year-old female who loves country music. Some of my favorites are Randy Travis, The Statlers, K.T. Oslin and Patsy Cline. Like bluegrass also. Would like to hear from single males who are country music fans. Will answer all letters. Photo appreciated. Ladies welcome, too. Sherry Cox, 19 N. Paradise Dr., Havre de Grace, MD 21078-1640.

● Hi. My name is Paul Johnson. I am a 31-year-old, divorced male, and I love country music. I would love to hear from other country music lovers, particularly females age 25-35. Paul Johnson, P.O. Box 214, Ostrander, OH 43061.

● Hi! My name is Gail Carter. I'm 36, married and love country music. Some favorites are Alabama, Clint Black, Patty Loveless, Reba McEntire, The Judds, George Jones and many more. Would love to hear from country music fans from all over. Please write. Gail Carter, 238 Trenton Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201.

● Hi. My name is Terry Moore. I'm a 25-year-old cowboy who likes all country music and oldies rock 'n' roll. Would like to hear from all single cowgirls. Send photo. Terry Moore, 28820 Memory Ln., Winchester, CA 92396.

● I would like to hear from people all over the world who truly love and appreciate Mary Chapin Carpenter's music. I'm especially interested in hearing from Mary Chapin fans in my neck of the woods—the San Francisco Bay area—but will gladly receive letters from anywhere. Would also love to hear from Anne Murray fans. No prisoners! Connie Ann Anzalone, 316 Pinefield Rd., San Jose, CA 95134.

● Howdy! I'm a 17-year-old girl who loves country music. Some favorites are Tom Wopat, Aaron Tippin, Dwight Yoakam, Clint Black, John Schneider, Randy Travis and Alan Jackson. I enjoy country walks, horses, westerns and, of course, listening to country music on the radio. I'd love to hear from guys out there who love the country way of life. A photo would be nice! Write soon! Tina Barger, P.O. Box 47, Callensburg, PA 16213.

● My name is Laurie. I'm a single, 22-year-old female who loves country music. My favorites are Reba, Garth Brooks, Clint Black, Lorrie Morgan, Alan Jackson and Dwight Yoakam. Would like to hear from anyone, especially guys age 20-30. Will answer all letters. Laurie M. Pillard, 901 Rivercrest, Allen, TX 75002.

● Hi! My name is Lisa. I'm 33 years old and a country music fan. Favorites include Clint Black, Randy Travis, Patsy Cline, The Judds, Dwight Yoakam and Highway 101. I will answer all, please write. Lisa Pyle, 1045 N. Thornton Ave., Orlando, FL 32803.

● I'm a divorced, 28-year-old female who's a big fan of country music. My all-time favorite is Dwight Yoakam. Would love to hear from all those avid Dwight fans. Will answer all letters. Send photo if you'd like. Lori Clay, 1163 Mareder Rd., Port Angeles, WA 98362.

● Hello, country music fans. I'm looking for country fans to write to. I'm 35 years old. Some favorites are The Statler Brothers, George Strait, Shane Barmby, Kenny Rogers, Ray Stevens and Eddie Rabbitt. Interests are country music, *Santa Barbara*, making new friends, fishing and bowling. No prisoners. Shirley Swafford, P.O. Box 65, Nowata, OK 74048.

● Hi! My name is Sharon. I'm a 17-year-old Navajo Indian from Arizona. I would like to hear from people 16 and up. My country favorites are George Strait and The Judds, also like pop/rock. I'll answer all letters. Please, no inmates. Sharon Begay, P.O. Box 685, Pinon, AZ 86510.

New Address

To all who've written me, please note my new address. Ron Kluth, 215 W. Mullett St. #209, Portage, WI 53901.

● Hi! I'm Gloria! I'm as old as I feel, and most of the time I feel young enough to ride across Texas and dance all night! I love country music. Write, send pictures, and I'll write back in return. My dream is to live out West, work with horses and learn to do the Cotton-Eye Joe. Gloria J. Hirst, P.O. Box 486, Adams Center, NY 13606.

● I'm a single, 31-year-old female who's looking for male and female pen pals who love country music. My favorites are Tanya Tucker, Dan Seals, Don Williams, Garth Brooks and Patty Loveless. Hobbies are playing my guitar and helping other people. Age doesn't matter. I'll answer all letters. Send photo and I'll do the same. No prisoners, please. Nellie Behrens, Box 509, San Jose, CA 95103.

● Hi! I'm a 22-year-old, single male who loves country music. A few favorites are Dwight Yoakam, Garth Brooks, Patty



World Radio History

HANK WILLIAMS JR.

PULL-OUT
CENTERFOLD
OF THE MONTH

HANK WILLIAMS JR.

Facts of Life

Personal Data

Given Name: Randall Hank Williams Jr.
Birthdate: May 26, 1949
Birthplace: Shreveport, Louisiana
Family: Wife, Mary Jane; Children from previous marriages, Shelton, Holly, Hilary; Father, Hank Williams; Mother, Audrey Sheppard Williams
Famous for: Playing guitar, banjo, fiddle, piano, bass guitar, steel guitar, and other instruments.

Vital Statistics

Height: 6'2"
Weight: 190 lbs.
Color eyes: Brown
Color hair: Brown

Recording Career

Record Label: Warner Bros. Records, 1815 Division St., Nashville, TN 37203.

Albums	Release Date
<i>Hank Williams Jr. Sings the Songs of Hank Williams</i>	1964
<i>Great Country Favorites</i> (with Connie Francis)	1964
<i>Your Cheatin' Heart</i> (soundtrack)	*1965
<i>Father and Son</i>	1965
<i>Ballads of the Hills and Plains</i>	1965
<i>Blues My Name</i>	1966
<i>Again</i> (with Hank Williams)	1966
<i>Country Shadows</i>	1966
<i>My Own Way</i>	1967
<i>The Best of Hank Williams Jr.</i>	1967
<i>My Songs</i>	1968
<i>A Time to Sing</i> (soundtrack)	1968
<i>Luke the Drifter Jr.</i> (released in January)	1969
<i>Songs My Father Left Me</i>	1969
<i>Luke the Drifter Jr.</i> (released in June)	1969
<i>Live at Cobo Hall</i>	1969
<i>Greatest Hits</i>	1969
<i>Sunday Morning</i>	1969
<i>Luke the Drifter Jr.</i>	1970



<i>Hank Williams Jr.—G.A.S.</i>	1970
<i>Singing My Songs, Johnny Cash</i>	1970
<i>Removing the Shadow</i> (with Lois Johnson)	1970
<i>All For the Love of Sunshine</i>	1970
<i>I've Got a Right to Cry</i> (They All Used to Belong to Me)	1971
<i>Sweet Dreams</i>	1971
<i>Greatest Hits, Volume II</i>	1972
<i>Eleven Roses</i>	1972
<i>Send Me Some Lovin'</i> (with Lois Johnson)	1972
<i>After You</i>	1973
<i>The Legend of Hank Williams in Song and Story</i>	1973
<i>Just Pickin'...No Singin'</i>	1973
<i>The Last Love Song</i>	1973
<i>Living Proof</i>	1973
<i>Insights Into Hank Williams in Song and Story</i>	1974
<i>Bocephus</i>	1975
<i>Hank Williams Jr. and Friends</i>	1976
<i>Fourteen Greatest Hits</i>	1976
<i>One Night Stands</i>	1977
<i>The New South</i>	1977
<i>Family Tradition</i>	*1979

<i>Whiskey Bent and Hell Bound</i>	**1979
<i>Habits Old and New</i>	*1980
<i>Rowdy</i>	*1981
<i>The Pressure Is On</i>	**1981
<i>High Notes</i>	*1981
<i>Hank Williams Jr.'s Greatest Hits Volume I</i> (double platinum)	**1982
<i>Strong Stuff</i>	*1983
<i>Man of Steel</i>	*1983
<i>Major Moves</i>	*1984
<i>Five-O</i>	*1985
<i>Hank Williams Jr.'s Greatest Hits Volume II</i>	*1985
<i>Montana Cafe</i>	*1986
<i>The Early Years</i> (re-issue)	1986
<i>Hank "Live"</i>	*1987
<i>Born to Boogie</i>	**1987
<i>Wild Streak</i>	*1988
<i>Greatest Hits Volume III</i>	**1989
<i>Lone Wolf</i>	*1990
<i>America (The Way I See It)</i>	*1990
<i>Pure Hank</i>	1991

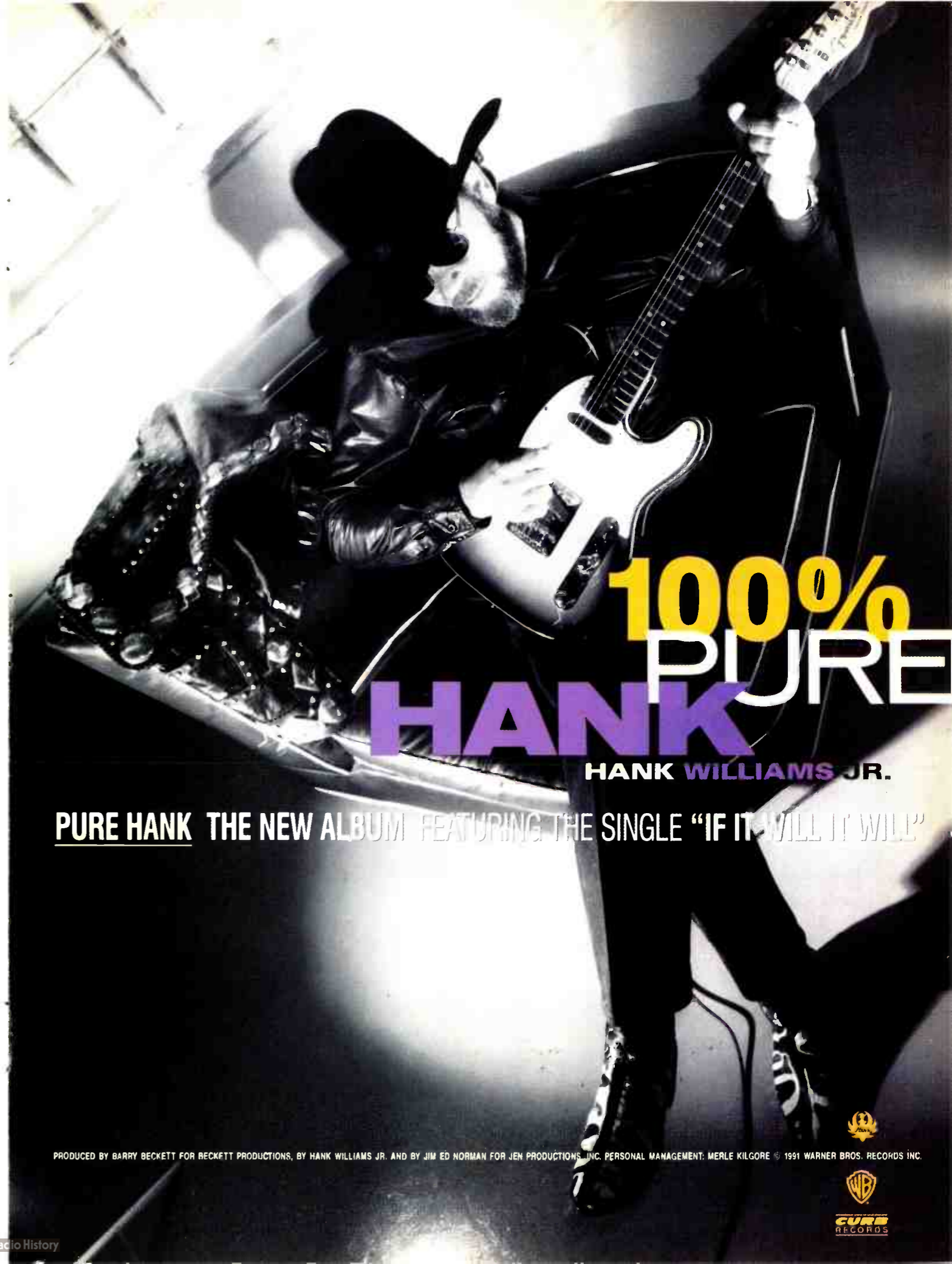
*Gold Album, over 500,000 sold.
 **Platinum Album, Over 1,000,000 sold.

Awards Highlights

15 BMI Writer's Awards; 1985 CMA, ACM and American Music Awards Video of the Year, "All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming Over Tonight"; 1987 CMA and ACM Entertainer of the Year/CMA Video of the Year, "My Name Is Bocephus"; 1988 CMA and ACM Entertainer of the Year; 1989 CMA and ACM Video of the Year, "There's a Tear in My Beer"/CMA Vocal Event of the Year, "There's a Tear in My Beer"; 1990 Grammy, Vocal Collaboration of the Year, "There's a Tear in My Beer," with Hank Williams Sr.

Fan Club

To join Hank Jr.'s fan club and get newsletter, catalog, biography, photos, tour schedule and more, send check for \$8 plus \$1.95 postage and handling to: *Country Music Magazine*, RSD 5691, 329 Riverside Ave., Westport, CT 06880.



100%
PURE
HANK
HANK WILLIAMS JR.

PURE HANK THE NEW ALBUM FEATURING THE SINGLE "IF IT WILL IT WILL"

PRODUCED BY BARRY BECKETT FOR BECKETT PRODUCTIONS, BY HANK WILLIAMS JR. AND BY JIM ED NORMAN FOR JEN PRODUCTIONS, INC. PERSONAL MANAGEMENT: MERLE KILGORE © 1991 WARNER BROS. RECORDS INC.



Loveless, Holly Dunn and many more. I'd like to hear from single females, age 18-25, who love the outdoors, sports and seeing new sights. Please send picture. Roger Couch, P.O. Box 233, Odessa, MO 64076.

● Hi! My name is Debbie McGraw. I'm 31 years old, married, with a 2-year-old daughter. I love country music and *Country Music Magazine*. Favorite artists are Alan Jackson, Travis Tritt, Doug Stone, T. Graham Brown, Exile, Garth Brooks and other hunks. I'd love to hear from other female country music fans. Debbie McGraw, 282 Sussex Cir., Jupiter, FL 33458.

● Hi. My name is Norman, and I'll always be a country music lover. I enjoy the old, and most of the new artists. Favorites are Reba, Patty Loveless, Wild Rose, Patsy Cline, Marty Robbins, Carl Smith, The Carter Family, Faron Young, Dolly, Holly Dunn, Baillie and The Boys, The Judds and Lorrie Morgan. Will answer all letters. Also enjoy NASCAR, movies and most sports. Norman Wojciechowski, AM-6872 Housing Unit D, Drawer K, Dallas, PA 18612.

● Hi! My name is Bev. I'm 40 years old. I've been married for 22 years and have three children. I live on a farm that my husband and I built. I do crafts and love country music. Favorites range from Dwight Yoakam and Alan Jackson to George Jones, Loretta Lynn and Patsy Cline. If you're in my age group and share my interests, I'd like to be pen pals. Bev Hammock, RR 2 Box 197A, Hannibal, MO 63401.

● I'm a 25-year-old single lady and would love to make new friends. My favorites are Loretta Lynn, Randy Travis, Reba McEntire, Alan Jackson, Alabama, Clint Black and Garth Brooks. Will write to anyone. Send photo if possible. Cheryl Masterson, P.O. Box 40, Oak Ridge, MO 63769.

● Hi! My name is Paula Thomas. I'm 22 years old. I live in North Carolina. I love country music, and my favorites are Ricky Van Shelton, Randy Travis, The Oak Ridge Boys, Alabama, The Judds, Reba McEntire, Elvis Presley, Conway Twitty, Hank Williams Jr. and Sr. I'd like to hear from guys age 21-30. I love making new friends, so please write. Paula Thomas, 805 Angier Hwy., Benson, NC 27504.

● Hi! I'm a 32-year-old, married, mother of one. I like a lot of country music and some rock 'n' roll. My favorites are Sawyer Brown, Ronnie McDowell, Kentucky HeadHunters, Eddie Rabbitt and many others. I welcome all who would like to write, and I'll return the favor. Sharlene Parsons, 2000 Larson Lane, Goose Creek, SC 29445.

● My name is Rick. I'm 37 and divorced. I've been a country music fan since I was a wee lad! Some favorites are Reba McEntire, George Strait, Holly Dunn and K.T. Oslin. My hobbies include dancing, photography and travelling. I'd love to hear from country girls age 25-37. Thanks! Rick Mouze, 1106 Sandpiper Dr., Corona Del Mar, CA 92625.

● Hi! My name is Becky and I'm 20 years old. I love country music and would like to correspond with other country music lovers. My favorites are Garth Brooks, Ronnie McDowell, Ricky Van Shelton,

Skip Ewing and The Oak Ridge Boys. Will try to answer all who write. Becky Blevins, Rte. 2 Box 918, Saltville, VA 24370.

● Hi. I'd like to find some pen pals for my daughter, who just came to live with us. Her name is Laura. She's 17 and her favorite is Randy Travis. Thanks! Laura Scare, c/o Carol Morgan, 10651 Youngs Rd., Quincy, MI 49082.

● Hi. I'm married and 51 years young. Some of the things that keep me busy are sewing, quilting, walking, volunteer work, country living, country music, Southern gospel music, reading and writing letters. Some of my favorite singers are Benny McArthur, George Strait, Alabama, The Oaks, Johnny Rodriguez, Merle Haggard and Don Williams. I look forward to mail time each day, and I'll answer all letters. Please fill my mailbox. Carolyn Banks, RR 3 Box 135, Wheatfield, IL 46392.

● Hi! I'm 23 years old, single, and I love country music. Some of my favorites are Waylon, Steve Earle, Mickey Gilley and The Kentucky HeadHunters. Will answer anyone who writes. Barbara Trudeau, P.O. Box 1363, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, CANADA P6A 6N2.

● Howdy! I'm a 20-year-old female who loves country music. Some of my favorites are Clint Black, Randy Travis, K.T. Oslin and The Judds. Will answer all letters. Annette Bielak, P.O. Box 1274, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055.

● Hi! I'm from the Great White North. My name is Dennis. I'm 29 years old, and a former rodeo participant. I'll be moving to the U.S. in the next year—not sure what part, yet. Would like to hear from all you cowgirls out there, age 22-33, who want to help me make up my mind. I like camping, horses, sports, dancing and quiet times. Dennis Dodds, c/o Chilliers Pub, Nelson, British Columbia, CANADA V1L 5P4.

● Hello there! I would like to have some pen pals, men or women, of any age. I'm 51 years old and divorced. My favorites are Billy Joe Royal, Ricky Van Shelton, Elvis and K.T. Oslin. I'm a nurse's aide, working in newborn nursery. Please write. Kris Swinford, 508 Dewey St., Greenwood, MS 38930.

● Wanted: a good-looking cowboy who likes to dance. I'm a 19-year-old redneck who was raised on country music and loves to dance. I like everything from rodeos to camping, and one of these days I'd like to learn to play the guitar. Please, no inmates. Photo if possible. Rose Meis, Box 31, Catherine, KS 67627.

● My name is Jennifer. I'm a 27-year-old single mom who loves country music. My favorites are Clint Black, Dwight Yoakam, George Strait, Kathy Mattea and Reba McEntire. I'd like to hear from other country fans. My dream is to live on a ranch and ride off into the sunset with my special cowboy. Any cowboys out there interested? No inmates, please. Send photo, I'll answer all. Jennifer Brennan, P.O. Box 615, E. Granby, CT 06026.

● Hi. My name is Susan. I'm 25 years old and married. Would like to hear from anyone, any age, who's interested in friendship only. I enjoy The Judds, Randy Travis, John Anderson, George Strait and many others. I'll try to answer all letters.

I especially like pen pals from other countries. No inmates, please. Susan White, 308 LeGrand Blvd., White Lake, MI 48383.

● Hi. I'm a single lady, 61 years young. Would like to hear from other country music lovers around my age. My favorite is Ricky Van Shelton. Also like K.T. Oslin, Alan Jackson, Barbara Mandrell and Lorrie Morgan. Other all-time favorites are Marty Robbins and Elvis. Ann Pool, 1821 Hopper Ct., Hopkinsville, KY 42240.

● Hi! I'm a 30-year-old, misplaced Yankee, doing time in Oklahoma. I'm looking for pen pals 25-40 years old. I like Reba, The Judds and Lorrie Morgan, to name a few. Also enjoy old and classic rock 'n' roll. Arthur Todd #152927, P.O. Box 548, Lexington, OK 73051.

Note of Thanks

Thanks to everyone who answered my ad and sent a tape of "Golden Streets of Glory." I wish I could thank you all personally! My mom is in remission now, I don't know for how long, but I'm thankful to have this extra time with her. The tape really made her happy. Thanks also for all your words of encouragement and cards. Rosemarie Hayton, Meriden, CT

● My name is Anne. I live in New York now, but I'm planning to move south in November—preferably near the South Carolina-Georgia border. I'd like to make some new friends before I get there. I'm a 53-year-old single woman (mom of 6, grandma of 12). I was raised on country and bluegrass. Some favorites are Webb Pierce, Hank Snow, Slim Whitman, Marty Robbins, Bill Monroe, Alan Jackson and Clint Black. I'm a cook and baker by profession. Hobbies are making quilts, reading and watching TNN. Thanks in advance for writing! Anne Burford, Oak Creek Apartments G40, Auburn, NY 13201.

● Hello. I'm a James Burton fan who would like to correspond with other fans of his. I'm also a big fan of Chet Atkins, Merle Travis and Jerry Reed. I'd be interested in trading records or buying. Sylvia Corley, P.O. Box 51475, Jacksonville Beach, FL 32240.

● Hi. I'm a 40-year-old, single female who's a big fan of Mark Chesnut. Would love to hear from other country music fans, any age. Sheila Morgan, P.O. Box 8095, Greenville, SC 29604.

● Hi! I'm a 26-year-old, devoted country music lover from the Evergreen State. My Number One favorite is The Shoppe, but I also love the Mandrells, Anne Murray, Dolly Parton, The Oaks, Exile, Sawyer Brown, Reba, Tanya, NGDB, The Judds and many more. My other interests are music videos, photography, cats, concerts, fairs, festivals, carnivals and amusement parks. Would love to hear from true country music fans, age 20 to 40, with similar interests. No prisoners, please. Laurie Ferry, P.O. Box 1752, Bellingham, WA 98227-1752.

● I'd love to have some pen pals who listen to country music. I do not have any one favorite—but, like a lot of women, I've always been a big fan of Elvis. I'm 52 years young. Alta Anderson, 2935

Arthur St. NE, Minneapolis, MN 55418.

● Hi there! I'm a 15-year-old country girl. I love rodeos, riding, horses and dancing to country music. My favorites are Garth Brooks, George Strait, Reba McEntire, Shenandoah, Clint Black and Chris LeDoux. I'm a member of FFA and raise sheep. Would love to hear from girls and guys age 15 plus. Susan Johnson, 1018 Damon Ct., Santa Rosa, CA 95401.

● Hi! This 63-year-old country music lover would like to hear from others. Some favorites are Conway Twitty, Ricky Van Shelton, George Jones and Loretta Lynn. Nellie Cline, 141 W. North St., Iltion, NY 13357.

● My name is Sandi. I'm 44 years young and love country music all the way. My favorites are Keith Whitley, Waylon and Willie, Reba, Garth Brooks and Charlie Daniels. I like craft-making and collecting. Would love to hear from male or female country music fans from anywhere. Sandi Fagerlie, RR 1, Audubon, MN 56511.

● I'm a 46-year-old lady who loves country music. My favorites are many. I'm a single woman, and I'll answer all. Want to hear from males out there who are 45-55 years of age. Lucille Warren, P.O. Box 208, Manawa, WI 54949.

● Hi! My name is Kimberly. I'm a 20-year-old country music fan from Texas. My favorites include Clint Black, Garth Brooks, Randy Travis, George Strait and Alan Jackson. I enjoy reading, writing letters and watching TV. I would especially like to hear from males, age 20-25, with similar interests. Please send photo if possible. I'll answer all. No inmates, please! Kimberly Simpson, P.O. Box 326, Kyle, TX 78640.

● Hi, my name is Georgia K. Smith, and I'm in my early 60's. I'm a long-time country music fan, and my favorites are Merle Haggard, Lorrie Morgan and George Strait. I like attending flea markets and collecting. Ladies only, please! Georgia K. Smith, 211 Newman, Pueblo, CO 81005.

● Hi. My name is Kay. I'm a 32-year-old, divorced mother of two. I love country music, dancing, writing letters and making new friends. I'd like to hear from nice guys, 29 to 39. All letters will be answered, and I will gladly exchange photos. K. Richmond, 3416 Grissom St., Bakersfield, CA 93309.

● Hello! My name is Rosaline. I'm a 27-year-old single parent. I love country music. My favorites are George Strait, Vern Gosdin, Dwight Yoakam, Patsy Cline, Delbert McLinton and more. I enjoy going to concerts and country dancing. I love country living! Would love to hear from anyone age 25-38 who loves country music. Please send photo, I'll send one in return. No inmates, please. Rosaline Dupre, 24A Delta Dr., Venus, TX 76084.

Send material for Newsletter to Country Music Magazine, 329 Riverside Avenue, Suite 1, Westport, Connecticut 06880. Mark your envelope, Attention: Newsletter. To be considered for publication, material MUST include your magazine mailing label or your membership number. Items sent in without verification of membership will be discarded.

Tennessee Ernie Ford

Singer, songwriter, disk jockey and television pioneer—The Old Pea Picker's versatility earned him a place in the Hall of Fame.

by Rich Kienzle

Tennessee Ernie Ford found himself in a strange position in late 1955. Busy with a CBS Radio show, a daily NBC-TV show and concert dates galore, he had little time to record for Capitol Records, his record company since 1949, and they had nothing to release on him. Earlier that year his version of the "Ballad of Davy Crockett" had gone Top Ten on both the pop and country charts, but now he was almost in breach of contract.

On the afternoon of September 20, 1955, Ernie went into the Capitol studio with Jack Fascinato's band—the band that backed him on his NBC show—and recorded a song that had worked well with both his TV and his live audiences. That song, written by one of Ernie's old friends from *Hometown Jamboree*, the Los Angeles country music radio and TV program that had launched him seven years earlier, was Merle Travis' coal mining ballad, "Sixteen Tons." Merle had recorded his version in 1946. That afternoon, Ernie recorded the upbeat, hip, jazzy arrangement he sang on the show and onstage. Released in mid-October, "Sixteen Tons" became a national event, selling 400,000 copies in just 11 days and remaining at Number One for ten weeks on the country charts and eight weeks on the pop charts. Journalists wrote about the song's social commentary, and Travis' Kentucky hometown erected a monument honoring both Merle and the song. Between the record and the show, Ernest Jennings Ford of Bristol, Tennessee, became a household word.

Thirty-five years later, Ernie's importance may not be obvious to everyone, but his 1990 induction into the Country Music Hall of Fame was altogether fitting. Through a combination of talent, versatility and good timing, he proved that country singers could make respectable television personalities without compromising. In doing so, he opened the door for many others. In addition, his early recordings reveal a buoyant, robust singer who created exciting hillbilly boogie. And, finally, in the late 1950's, when singles were still the major means of selling country records, Ernie, ahead of his time, concentrated on

recording albums.

He was born in Bristol, Tennessee, in 1919, to parents who were both religious and musical. His first job was as a staff announcer at WOPI in Bristol. He studied singing in Cincinnati in 1939, but returned to announcing to pay the bills, working in both Atlanta and Knoxville. During World War II he was an Army Air Corps officer stationed in California. Following his discharge, he and his new wife, Betty, settled in Southern California.

Ernie eventually joined KFXM in San Bernardino, where he alternated routine announcing and newscasts with a coun-

try disk jockey program that inspired the "Pea Picker" character he made famous. In a sassy, exaggerated hillbilly voice, he introduced the hits of the day and occasionally sang along with the records. Loyal King, owner of KXLA radio in Pasadena, heard him and hired him for KXLA. He also gave him a morning deejay show, *Bar Nothing Ranch Time*, for which Ernie reprised the down-home "Pea Picker." Meanwhile, KXLA's *Dinner Bell Round-Up* show, emceed by bass player and announcer Cliffie Stone, was just getting started; Cliffie liked what he heard from the station's new disk jockey. He invited Ernie to sing on the show. Ernie was cautious, not wanting to jeopardize his announcing job. But by 1948, when the show, renamed the *Hometown Jamboree*, became one of the major programs on KXLA's new TV station, Ernie was ready to join the cast, singing and doing comedy. Cliffie, also a Capitol Records sideman and the label's country producer, took Ernie to Capitol's head producer, Lee Gillette, who signed him immediately.

The potential of the boogie-woogie beat in country music first became apparent in various hits by The Delmore Brothers and Arthur Smith's "Guitar Boogie." Ernie himself liked boogie, but his first Capitol release was a simple cover of Red Foley's hit, "Tennessee Border," that made it to Number Eight—not bad for a new artist. His next single, "Country Junction," was his first boogie tune. It went to Number 14. Many of Ernie's early records featured dazzling backing by the team of guitarist Jimmy Bryant and steel guitar wizard, Speedy West, both regulars in the *Hometown Jamboree* staff band. His 1949 single, "Smokey Mountain Boogie," a salute to his home area near the Great Smoky Mountains, made it to Number Four, but the next, a version of Frankie Laine's pop hit, "Mule Train," gave Ernie his first Number One, holding that spot for four weeks. The B-side, "Anticipation Blues," a novelty number Ernie wrote in



salute to his wife Betty's pregnancy with their first son, reached Number Three.

The 1950 follow-up was a change of pace: the dramatic "Cry of the Wild Goose," which reached Number Two. Ernie's potential was clear to Lee Gillette, who was always willing to experiment, and in 1950 he teamed him with pop singer, Kay Starr, for the bluesy "I'll Never Be Free." The single's success amazed everyone: Number Two in the country field and Number Three in pop. Ernie's original tune, "The Shot Gun Boogie," inspired by his frequent hunting trips, a bigger country hit than "Sixteen Tons," stayed at Number One on the country charts for 14 weeks early in 1951 and reached the Top 20 on *Billboard's* pop charts.

Gillette continued to experiment. He teamed Ernie with ragtime pianist, Lou Busch (known on records as Joe "Fingers" Carr), for the rollicking "Tailor Made Woman," a Number Eight recording. Ernie's 1951 interpretation of Patti Page's pop hit, "Mister and Mississippi," gave him a Number Two country song, while "The Strange Little Girl" was a Top Ten ballad that year for three different artists: Ernie, Cowboy Copas and the duet team of Ernest Tubb and Red Foley. Ernie's 1952 hit was "Blackberry Boogie," with wild accompaniment by Bryant and West. In 1953, "Hey! Mr. Cotton Picker," co-written by actor Robert Mitchum, reached Number Eight. In England, the boogie numbers sold so well that in 1953 Ernie performed at the London Palladium. His "River of No Return," from the film of the same name, went to Number Nine in 1954. At this point, Cliffie Stone, who still exceed the *Hometown Jamboree*, became Ernie's manager.

Mainstream America may have had a stereotyped notion of country singers as ignorant, uneducated rubes—Ernie demolished that image. His announcing experience made him comfortable in the role of host, the "Pea Picker" character gave him instant identity and his *Hometown* experience gave him comedy skills. He was the ideal country artist to make the move to national TV.

Following the success of "Sixteen Tons" in 1956, NBC folded Ernie's daytime show and, on October 4th, debuted *The Ford Show*, a prime-time Ernie showcase sponsored by Ford Motors. It remained a success until Ernie left it in 1961. His high visibility made him a sought-after guest star on other top shows as well, including as the old CBS *Jack Benny Program*, *This Is Your Life* and even *Make Room for Daddy*. As his

PHOTOS COURTESY JIM LOAKES



Tennessee Ernie's biggest country hit was "The Shot Gun Boogie," which he wrote himself, but he's best known for his immortal recording of "Sixteen Tons" by Merle Travis. The Hall of Famer continues to perform today, though he limits his appearances.

TV career rose, demand for his singles tapered off. Instead, he focused on albums. *Hymns*, his first sacred LP, released in 1957, remained on *Billboard's* Top LP chart for 277 weeks—over five years. Two follow-up sacred albums also did well.

When the grind of managing Ernie's booming career began to affect Cliffie Stone's health, Stone bowed out. In 1959 his assistant, Jim Loakes, took over. Loakes remains Ernie's manager today.

When the NBC show ended in 1961, Ernie began broadcasting a daytime show for ABC from San Francisco. The show included such regulars as ex-*Hometown* singer-guitarist, Billy Strange. Strange and bass player, Johnny Mosher, were the only two musicians who backed Ernie on his intimate 1964 album of country standards, *Country Hits...Feelin' Blue*. That year "Hicktown," his final Top Ten single, peaked at Number Nine.

In the late 60's, Ernie continued recording (mostly bland, pop-flavored country) for Capitol, doing concerts and appearing on various country TV shows. Gradually, however, he scaled down. In 1974 he went to Russia as the star of the *Country Music USA* show sponsored

by the U.S. State Department. The cast put on 27 concerts in five Russian cities. In 1976, after nearly 30 years, he and Capitol parted ways. In the late 70's he hosted three specials for public broadcasting and made occasional appearances on *Hee Haw*.

Ernie's wife Betty died February 27, 1989, not long after Ernie's 70th birthday. He married Beverly Wood-Smith on June 11, 1989, the same year he taped his special, *50 Golden Years*, for TNN. His induction into the Hall of Fame in 1990 called attention to him again, proving that his excellence as a singer hasn't been forgotten, and several reissues have appeared in the past year, including his classic albums of Civil War songs of the North and South, originally released in 1961.

Today, Ernie Ford's musical contributions speak for themselves. And every country performer who's successfully made the transition to TV—Jimmy Dean, Johnny Cash, Roy Clark, Glen Campbell, The Mandrells and others—owe a debt to the pioneering work of the ol' Pea Picker himself.

Albums Available
See For CMSA Members Only.

Readers Create

Say Hello to Joyce Winegar

From Palo Cedro, California, comes Joyce Winegar, a member who says, "I enjoy Country Music Magazine so much, I can hardly wait for it to show up in my mailbox! Like many others, I'm looking forward to when it is a monthly occurrence." Joyce notes that she writes both lyrics and music, although she is not a musician. She says that her songs come from "a pure love for—and over 25 years of listening to nothing but—country music."

I Didn't Mean to Say Goodbye

Well the hurtin's deep
But I don't let it show
Me and my foolish heart
Are the only ones who know.

I walked out on him
Just like I said I would
To save my foolish pride
Now I just sit and cry
I didn't mean to say goodbye.

I didn't mean to say goodbye
It wasn't in my plan
To be
The one who'd cry.
I thought that he'd

Come runnin' after me
How could I know
She'd walk right in.

I satisfied
My foolish pride
But she's the one who wins.

I didn't know
How much I loved him
Til I walked out
And she walked in
Now I just sit and cry
I didn't mean to say goodbye.

I didn't mean to say goodbye
It wasn't in my plan
To be
The one who'd cry.

I walked out on him
Just like I said I would
To save my foolish pride
Now I just sit and cry
I didn't mean to say goodbye.

—Joyce Winegar

Growing Up in Dust Bowl Days

Bernice Yust Dack of McCook, Nebraska, remembers growing up in Oklahoma during the Great Depression. Says Bernice, "I have loved singing, playing musical instruments, recording and composing country music just about all of my 64 years. I'll probably be the only 80-year-old in the world who'll be playing a guitar and reading Country Music Magazine while rocking away in my rocking chair."

A Great Depression Child's Story

Mama please don't send our music box away,
I've never heard sounds like that before.
Can't we keep it just one more day,
Mama, why do we have to be so poor.

Mama please don't sell it to that man so tall,
Can't we keep it like you said we could.
We haven't had it very long at all,
And it makes me feel so very good.

Mama can't you sell him a chicken or a duck,
Or that turkey with the broken toe.
I love the sweet sounds it makes so much,
And we'll never get another one I know.

I don't want to give up the joy I've found,
Mama please sell him a goat or a cow.
And if that's the way the angels sound,
I want to go to Heaven now.

Why have I been crying so awful long,
Mama, don't you know the reason why.
I want to hear another song,
But you sold it to that silly old guy.

Mama, now don't you start crying too,
And please don't be so awful sad.
That's alright mama, I forgive you.
I know you needed the money real bad.

—Bernice Yust Dack



"Hey Old Saddam, You Figured Wrong!"

Hank Jr.'s recent hit, "Don't Give Us a Reason," was reason enough for Sgt. Leigh W. Cole, a career Marine, to make this cartoon rendering of Hank while serving in Operation Desert Storm. Says Sgt. Cole, "This sketch was done from a foxhole with my Walkman providing inspiration. My favorite hobby is sketching faces of country stars. Hank Jr. is not only fun and easy to cartoon, he's also this Marine's favorite."

Thanks for sending your sketch, Sgt. Cole! By the way, have you met SSgt. Fields and Moo-Moo, featured in last issue's Collections?

Kathy Mattea Fan

June Cappi, a member from Lambertville, Wisconsin, sends along her lyrics to "For You, Bluegrass/Country Music Fans." It was written about Kathy Mattea, one of June's favorite performers.

For You, Bluegrass/Country Music Fans

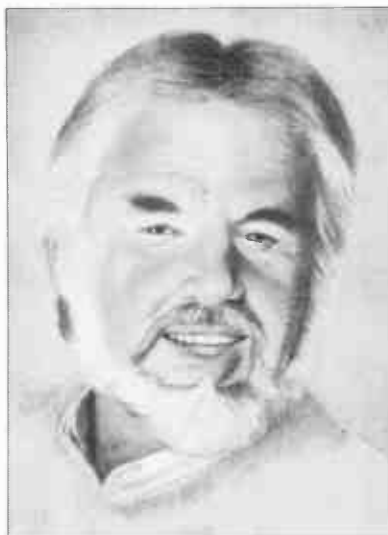
Well I grew up in bluegrass country,
Pickin' and singin' and hopin' to be
Singing' on the stage at Opryland
To all the fans in country music-land.

Oh, I sang on demos and performed for free,
Singin' the music of my bluegrass country,
Came to Nashville, my guitar and me
Singin' the songs that came naturally.

Bluegrass/country music fans,
I'll sing for you all over the land,
You made my dream bigger than life so far,
Bein' a bluegrass/country music star.

From "Eighteen Wheels and a Dozen Roses,"
The wheels turned 'round to a different focus,
Into "Where've You Been," it was all brand-new,
A dozen roses, my fans, I send to you.

—June Cappi



A Long-Time Kenny Rogers Fan

Charles Sciba sent along his full-color rendering of Kenny Rogers. Charles, who writes in from Camarillo, California, says he's been a fan of Kenny Rogers since Kenny's early days with The First Edition and The New Christy Minstrels. He plans to send Kenny the original portrait.

"Let me tend
my flowers, please!"

"Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary"

"Mary" wants to take care of her "garden" all by herself. When you interrupt her, she'll act "quite contrary," but only for a moment. Just tell her how pretty her garden is, and she'll soon be all smiles again!

"Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary" is the first issue in a new collection of hand-painted porcelain dolls by artist Dianna Effner.

"Mary's" full-sleeved frock is tailored of cotton-blend floral fabric in soft pastels. Over it, she wears a dainty pinafore highlighted by smocking, pintucking, threaded ribbon, and embroidered eyelet trim. Her matching pantalettes are trimmed in eyelet and ribbon, and her leather-like shoes complement her outfit. Even her watering can and pail of flowers are hand-decorated.

Recommended by the Ashton-Drake Galleries, "Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary" is certified Premiere Grade—your assurance of superior artistry and craftsmanship. At \$78.00, she is an heirloom-quality doll of exceptional value today, and may prove to be a wise investment for the future.

Bring this delightful nursery-rhyme character into your home. Act promptly... "Mary, Mary" is issued in an edition ending forever in 1991, after which molds for this doll will be broken and no more porcelain for "Mary, Mary" will ever be cast. Order today.

©1991 The Ashton-Drake Galleries, 9200 North Maryland Avenue, Niles, Illinois 60648-1397



Shown smaller than actual size of 15 inches tall. Complete with watering can, fabric flowers in a pail, and doll stand.



The Ashton-Drake Galleries
9200 North Maryland Avenue
Niles, Illinois 60648-1397

THE ASHTON-DRAKE GALLERIES



YES, please enter my reservation for "Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary," first issue in the *Dianna Effner's Mother Goose* collection. Limit: One doll per customer. I understand that I need **SEND NO MONEY NOW**. I will pay for the doll in four convenient monthly installments of \$19.50* each, the first being billed before shipment.

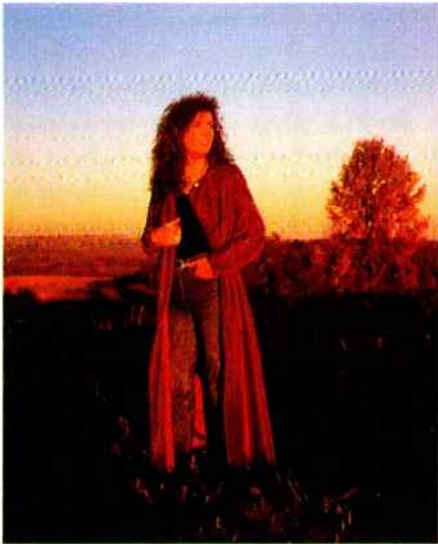
My satisfaction is unconditionally guaranteed. I understand that I may, for any reason, return "Mary, Mary" to the Ashton-Drake Galleries at any time *within one full year* after I receive her for a refund or credit of the full purchase price, including postage.

PLEASE RESPOND BY:
June 15, 1991

X _____
Signature Date
()
Name (please print) Telephone
Address Apt. No.
City State Zip

*Plus a total of \$3.94 home delivery fee and any applicable state sales tax. Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery. Canadian price: \$98.00 plus postage and handling and any applicable sales tax.

76471-D90305



by Bob Millard

It was a gray, cold afternoon, mid-week in February as the tour bus rumbled, waiting for Kathy Mattea. On board already were her backup singer, the young woman who sells T-shirts at the shows, her manager's right-hand man and the driver. For these folks it was just another tedious afternoon, killing time before a five-day road trip. For Mattea, and for me, it was the first day of a big risk. Careers were at stake. Hers and mine. Both were riding on the as-yet-unforeseeable success of her new album, *Time Passes By*.

You see, the three concerts Mattea had set for San Antonio, Dallas and Austin, Texas, were the first in her 1991 plan to become a headliner, to move out of the shadows of George Strait, Alabama and other big acts for whom she has been opening for the last several years. She last played Dallas before more than 17,000 at that city's Reunion Arena as the opening act for Strait. Moving to smaller theaters like the 800-seat Arcadia in Dallas' Lower Greenville area, she was trying out a 90-minute show, up from the 30-minute basket of radio hits she had always presented so professionally as an opener.

Also, she was adding a great deal more eclectic and acoustic material to her show, namely the songs from *Time Passes By*. They are, to a tune, strong, unique songs, songs of passion, humor, conscience and heart. There is no filler on the record. But, how could I say otherwise? I wrote one of the songs on the album.

As the winter light faded and the bus rolled slowly onto I-40 West, I had just quit my job as music critic for the *Dallas Times Herald* and moved to Nashville. Always before, when I interviewed an artist, I was the uninvolved observer. Now I was riding the bus back to Big D to see how a real, live audience in "my town" would go for my song in her show. I don't know who was more anxious about it—Kathy or me.

"The music on this album is really different from a lot of what I'd done before," Mattea explains. "I had waves of panic about whether I am doing the right thing. Will people get it, or am I one of those artists who won't listen to people and just goes off the deep end?"

"I was trying to trust my gut, but you never know. You want to push yourself, but you don't want to get to where nobody wants to hear what you have to say because they don't really get where you've gone. It's a thin line to walk sometimes, and until you've finished it and it's out there, you don't know if you've gone too far."

KATHY MATTEA

Takes a Risk

After years as one of country music's underappreciated staples, Kathy Mattea has recently landed Gold records and industry awards.

*But instead of playing it safe, she's gone out on a musical limb with her new album, *Time Passes By*—taking our intrepid reporter with her.*





Going outside of formula, Kathy asked Suzzy, Maggie and Terre Roche—who make up folk trio The Roches—to add harmony vocals to a cut on *Time Passes By*. She's comfortable on stage with her new music. At home she and husband, Jon Vezner, take time to "recharge."



And the bus rolled on, through Memphis, through Little Rock, into the wee hours after midnight to the edge of Texarkana, where, after hours of nervous chatter and ice-breaking joking around, everyone but the bus driver crawled into tiny bunk beds and fell into what passes for sleep on the road. I would get off in Dallas, at 4 A.M., to meet them again in a few days when Kathy came back to play the Arcadia.

But, wait. Lest you think I used my position as a writer for the foremost country music magazine to push a tune on Mattea's album (something I couldn't have done if I'd wanted), let me explain. For all the familiarity with artists that a journalist tries to bring to readers, the truth is that journalists are generally not close personal friends of the artists they write about. But here we have a different case. When I met Kathy Mattea, more than ten years ago, she was a likable, enthusiastic kid of 20, and we were both struggling.

It was the late 70's, and I was a starving songwriter. Not without my moment in the sun, however. At that time I'd had one song recorded. Remember a line in Charlie Daniels' song, "The South's Gonna Do It Again," that goes, "All the good people down in Tennessee are digging Barefoot Jerry and CDB?" Well, Barefoot Jerry, a seminal Southern rock band of the 70's, recorded a song I'd co-written just before it broke up for good. My earnings over the years from that song would just about pay for lunch. In those days, Kathy was a part-time waitress trying to learn to operate the typesetting machine for the local magazine at which I was trying to become a journalist. Both of us had our hearts elsewhere.

In her early years in Nashville, Kathy's tiny apartment near Music Row was often the scene of potluck dinners attended by the raft of undiscovered songwriters she befriended. After dinner, bottles of cheap red wine and guitars got passed around. People shared their latest tunes, and Kathy, then building a repertoire for a budding eclectic, acoustic club act, often came away with songs from her friends to add to her own. That's how she heard my song, "Quarter Moon," which she has sung on and off for more than eight years now and has included on her new album, *Time Passes By*. The album is made up of songs like that, songs Kathy has picked up along the way and kept as personal favorites. Because they represented her secret, personal musical taste rather than the pop-country niche her record label signed her to fill, she was always too self-conscious to record them.

The difference now is her recognition that her biggest successes have come with her biggest artistic risks. Her winning ver-

sion of Nanci Griffith's "Love at the Five and Dime" was a breakthrough hit, though its story-song format and folk flavor seemed (to her, if no one else) greatly at variance with her previous mainstream material. It turned out, indeed, to be different; just different enough to raise her out of the journeyman middle ground of safe radio artists to become a big-selling star whose music has personal meaning for her fans.

"Where've You Been," co-written by her husband Jon Vezner, was another story song. Its plot and haunting melody carried Kathy to new heights and finally erased her deep-seated fear of her own best musical instincts as she discovered her fans not only liked her, they shared her musical tastes. It has been a career-making, as well as award-winning and Gold-selling, song for her, earning her a 1991 Grammy for Best Country Vocal Performance, Female. It also won the Grammy for Best Country Song and was the 1990 CMA Song of the Year—both awards going to the songwriters.

"Oh, yeah, it has opened a lot of doors for me," Kathy agrees. "And it has meant a lot to a lot of people in a real personal way. What I get when fans approach me is not a sort of sexual-based response but a 'let me tell you what happened to me' kind of thing. I get a real human reaction from my fans instead of being up on this pedestal. It's so much nicer to not feel like an object. (My songs) touch people on a human level."

"Where've You Been" has also brought financial success to both Kathy and Jon. Not great riches, but the ability to buy a new home, a comfortably big house in an unassuming Nashville neighborhood with a custom kitchen for her famous Italian family feasts and room enough for Jon's demo studio and her quiet room.

"We didn't buy a huge house—we bought a house where Jon and I can both work," she says. "I think that's going to be much nicer considering how much I'm on the road and how much demand there is these days. Jon is going to have a studio there and write there, so he'll be around more, and yet I'll still be able to have solitude."

More than any CMA Female Vocalist of the Year in recent memory—she won in '89 and '90—Kathy resists "striking while the iron is hot." Gold records—*Willow in the Wind* and *A Collection of Hits*—CMA awards and Grammys have created demands for more shows, more time spent in publicity and promotion. She frustrates her handlers by claiming time for herself, insisting on being off-duty enough to recharge her batteries. You see, even though a college drop-out, Kathy was an advanced placement student in high school. She is a brainy, introspective and emotionally-driven 31-year-old singer who wants to spend quality time with her husband when she's at home and the same with audiences when she's not.

"Yeah. If I don't have time to think about it, I get burned out, and I'm just a machine out there," she explains. "Then I have

nothing to give people. There are demands for time working, interviews and all the little things we call 'creep'. As in things that tend to creep up on you while you're not looking, so that one day you wake up and you don't have any time."

Mattea and Vezner were married three years ago this past Valentine's Day. Kathy initially rejected recording her husband's sentimental tunes for all the same reasons she didn't previously record any of the songs on *Time Passes By* (three of which are by Jon) because she felt they were different from the rest of the songs on her other albums. Since breaking through that barrier, Kathy and her husband have found they were made for each other in more than romantic ways. Their private and professional lives have grown together, taking both farther than they'd have gone alone.

"It's funny, you know, I think we've influenced each other," Mattea explains. "I think that what he wants to do with his writing and what I want to do with my singing are really similar, so we've encouraged each other. Through the process, I think we've grown together."

"I have such attachment to the album as a whole that it's nice when people say they liked every song. That's what you really strive for."

Kathy with Bob Millard.

as well. Actress Tess Harper was in the front row, clapping and cheering right along. Local club owners who had booked her when she was small potatoes were in the audience watching with a possessive pleasure as if it were their own daughter up there giving her senior recital, graduating at last. When it came time to do "Quarter Moon," Kathy looked down at me and introduced it as she always has, teasing me for having taken the road to journalism many years ago.

"And now here's a song by my friend, Bob Millard, who thinks he's a journalist, but he's really a songwriter," she said with a twinkle of mischief in her eye. There was something in my eyes just then, too; not a twinkle exactly, but something that temporarily blurred my vision a bit.

"He's been being a journalist right here in Dallas for a year or so, but not anymore," she finished. A cheer went up, which I prefer to think was more congratulations for my having written a song than relief that they would no longer have to read my stories and concert reviews, though you never know.



Back in Dallas. I was heartened to hear from one of Kathy's crew, as they set up the stage in the Arcadia a few days later, that the show in San Antonio had been a resounding success. Mattea herself agrees. She says the reaction has been great. "I really have such attachment to the album as a whole that it's really nice when people say they liked every song. That's what you really strive for."

Having been a music critic there for nearly a year and a half, I knew that the Arcadia Theater was the right place in Dallas for this particular Kathy Mattea show. There is a remarkable ring of country dance halls around Dallas, probably the best anywhere in America, anchored in the city by the 3,000-seat Cowboy's, but Kathy's new tack was only partly suitable for the boot-scooters. No, it was the Arcadia that would be best, a former vaudeville house and movie theater that had previously sold out shows for country's hip and eclectic artists, Rodney Crowell, Lyle Lovett and k.d. lang.

Mattea's house would be full that night,

Later, in the dressing room underneath the Arcadia's ancient stage, where she sat greeting fans and signing autographs, Kathy came out from behind the table to give me a hug. A friend of mine from the local free-lance corps stepped up and took our picture together. Funny, in all the years we've been friends, I think that's the first time we've done that. I had always been shy of pushing myself into her professional life that way.

But now Kathy's creative risk has become my own. I had always told friends—everyone but Kathy, actually—that should "Quarter Moon" ever get recorded, I would go back to my songwriting. In asserting a more personal musical vision, she had called my bluff. I'm going to be 40 this year, and I have acquaintances who will say, "He's gone middle-aged crazy with this songwriting thing." It's not that. As with Kathy finally daring to record all her secret favorite songs, one of them being mine, I've learned (from her) that you only live once and sometimes you just have to lead with your heart. And that sometimes it works. Thanks, Kath. ■



MARTY STUART

Country's Biggest Fan



In the wee hours of a Monday morning, on a hillbilly tour bus halfway between Memphis and Nashville, with a thoroughly wrung-out honky tonk back down the road behind him and his sound system thumping out great old Ernest Tubb tunes, Marty Stuart is in the groove. He's got the spirit.

Has he ever. Eyes hooded, chin up, body swaying smoothly, his rock 'n' roll rooster hairdo bobbing in time, he's conducting an imaginary orchestra—very much in the manner of his mentor and “lifetime executive producer,” the ever graceful Cowboy Jack Clement—and watching with a serene little grin as the three boys in his own lean, mean hillbilly rock band sing along with Ernest.

“Oh...maaaaan,” he drawls Mississippi slowly, with real wonder, as E.T.'s gravely, heartfelt old chords thwang steadily on. “Listen to that. Ernest was so great. I mean, don't that just say it *all!*?”

It does and it doesn't. Yes, the moment has its own perfection, particularly since it's happening on E.T.'s old Silver Eagle—Marty, having bought the iconic vehicle and kept it unchanged, is sitting exactly where Ernest used to sit, looking at the very same furnishings and fittings Ernest used to see around him as he rode the very same honky tonk miles we're riding now—and yes, the music has its own great beauty and meaning: You really don't have to look any further than E.T. if you're seeking the soul of country music. But what Marty means requires further illumination.

Marty Stuart, you see, is not just one of the cuter new country hunks offering some of the hotter new videos, some of the more happening new tunes and a personal style streets sideways of the pack. He's also the most ardent fan country music could hope for and the most effective link between the music's past and future for which we other fans could pray. When, an hour or so closer to Nashville, after lots more Ernest Tubb and a little Bob Dylan, he brings the palms of his hands deliberately together in front of his face,

saying “There. See? You understand what I'm trying to do?,” that's what he's talking about: He's saying that his job is to carry tradition into the future. To add to the chain of the music. Forge a new link.

That's not such an unusual vision for a musician, particularly a country or blues artist, but I've only rarely encountered it as passionately felt as it is in this man's heart, and I've never heard it as fully realized as it is in his music.

You may already have read the basic Marty Stuart story, in this magazine or another (he's been around a while), but repetition does it less harm than most.

The main theme of the story is one you don't encounter much these days, working apprenticeship. In other words, Marty reached his current position as a singer/songwriter/star-on-the-rise the old-fashioned way: He studied for it under the great masters. Most significant in his education were the late bluegrass guitarist Lester Flatt, with whom he started as a mandolin player at the age of 13; the noted Arkansas baritone Johnny Cash, in whose band he worked as a multi-instrumentalist until quitting to go solo at the age of 28 (he's 32 now); and the legendary Arthur Murray dance instructor/hillbilly record producer Jack

Clement, from whom, like Cash and many another famous rockabilly, he has absorbed his share of slow waltz karma and home-cooked vegetables at The Cowboy Arms Hotel & Recording Spa on Nashville's beautiful Belmont Boulevard.

Those aren't bad masters, and neither are some of the other musicians with whom he's worked the road and the studio over the years: Vassar Clements, Doc Watson, Bob Dylan, Billy Joel, Emmylou Harris, Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings and lots and lots of others. And he's been an integral part of all sorts of significant tours, records and get-togethers: Dylan's fabled Rolling Thunder Revue; the first *Highwayman* album and tour with Cash, Waylon, Kristofferson and Nelson; the wonderful second *Will the Circle Be Unbroken?* album with The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band.

**After years of playing
second fiddle/guitar
to a number of
superstars and some
moderate success on
his own, Marty
Stuart's dues-paying
is about to pay off.**



by Patrick Carr

His solo career also has depth. It's been longer, and has involved more recording, than the casual fan might realize. *Tempted*, his current MCA product, is in fact his fifth album, having been preceded by another MCA piece, *Hill-billy Rock*. He's also made a full album for CBS in 1987 that was never released; a "mini album," *Marty Stuart*, issued by CBS in its multi-artist 1986 "new Country" promotion; and *Busy Bee Cafe*, the 1982 Sugar Hill album which featured a band including Johnny Cash and Doc and Merle Watson and is now something of a collector's item.

Some resume, that—but until his "Hill-billy Rock" single started making chart waves last year, Marty's was a set of magnificent credentials without the only item which really matters in the big-time recording artist business: a hit followed by more of the same.

For a while, then, his aura was uncomfortable. There was the sense of an awful lot of talent going unsung, or worse yet,

getting buried. There was in fact the fear that CBS's junking of his career might prove fatal to his chances of making major label records, and beyond that the suspicion that his style and his music might be just too strong to sell, period; that he might just be both too rock and too country for Music Row. For as the late, great ground-breaking Gram Parsons could have told you, and the monstrous Joe Ely and the wild and wonderful Steve Earle still can, combining real hillbilly soul with real rock 'n' roll energy (as opposed to achieving the usual fusion: vaguely country lite rock) is a risky proposition in Music City, U.S.A. You can get run out of town in a hurry.

But Marty survived, and now he's happening. At MCA he has hits, momentum and the wholehearted support of the business guys. The company's top man in Nashville, Bruce Hinton, is emphatic on that point. "It's great when you can help a new artist break through, you know, but it's even more gratifying when you

can help someone who's been around a while, like Marty," he says. "And really, I love Marty. There's nothing else out there that sounds like Marty Stuart music. I think he's going to be an absolute giant."

Hinton could be over-optimistic in his estimate of Marty's commercial potential, but as to there being nothing out there like Marty Stuart music, that's a plain old unarguable fact. And it figures. Certainly, there are a few picker/singers with Marty's raw talent, but there's nobody with his depth in the most demanding areas of popular music—bluegrass at its highest level, first-class Nashville session work, major league rock 'n' roll—and even more to the point, there's nobody with his vision. Nobody else would have stood in the heart of modern Nashville and taken quite such an unfashionable position—country as music meant to blow you away—and then held it against all odds until it began to seem, well, almost profitable.

Now there's an interesting point. Basically, Marty Stuart's music is the first really successful new sound to come down the Nashville pike since George Strait began popularizing the Hunkytonk/New Traditionalist approach to commercial country almost a decade ago. So right now Marty stands alone, a hot-wired Glitterbilly Kid shooting off sparks in a corral of calm ol' Music Row cowpokes—but how long will that situation persist? After years of falling for slow-rolling hunks in hats, are you fans ready to cut loose again? Is Marty a market anomaly or a trend?

Nobody knows yet, but a lot of people might like to: the business guys, certainly, but also a few other roots-oriented but non-hunkeytonking, unhatted artists just breaking or bubbling under, or for that matter coming back: Lee Roy Parnell, Kevin Welch, Shelby Lynne, Carlene Carter, Delbert McClinton, Joe Ely himself. And then of course there's Manuel the tailor, the man who makes today's brightest hillbilly suits of lights. Manuel, who apprenticed with the late, legendary Nudie and whose business Marty began reviving almost single-handedly several years ago, is doing very well these days, as any half hour of CMT will show you, but if Marty really gets monstrous and Glitterbilly becomes a major trend, he's going to have to go 24 hours and put in a drive-thru window.

For his part Marty eschews speculation. He'll talk your ear off about music and tell you anything you want to know about his conservative, giving-value-for-money, in-for-the-long-haul business ethic, but as to his career future, all he'll do is frame the question. "Yup," he draws sleepily—if you can call a live wire laid-back, that's Marty—"the thing is, can we find a way around the hats?"



PHOTOS COURTESY PATRICK CARR



In Memphis, Marty and Patrick visited Sun Records, where legends and legendary music were made. Marty, a fan as well as a performer, got to fool around with some of the instruments there. It was a special stopover.



Again, who knows? But if it's a look you're trying to get around, a new and different look is what you need to do it with, and Marty certainly has that. As he speaks, sitting on the patio of a happening Nashville restaurant close to Music Row, he's dressed relatively inconspicuously, all in black and denim with just a pound or two of muted silver accessories—but even so, he stands out. When your overall effect is one of Keith Richards trying to be the Cisco Kid, or vice versa, you can't help attracting a little attention.

Marty laughs and remembers another Nashville lunch, when he was wearing one of Manuel's more colorful jackets and *really* standing out. People were rubbernecking, whispering. Fortunately Manuel himself was there. "Oh, don't worry about it," he said. "You look fine. Nobody in here has one like it."

Marty laughs again, remembering another time when he was playing a fair date in Michigan. There was a Ferris wheel off to the right of the stage, lit up bright and pretty in the night, and it kept drawing his attention. So between numbers he stepped to the mike and said, "Please excuse me if I keep drifting to the right. My suit thinks that's its mother."

Marty's a funny man, and getting funnier: lightening *way* up. Not that he was ever exactly a drag. As you'll hear from all the musicians he's played with and inspired in one way or another—technically, creatively, across barriers of age and culture and uptightness of all kinds—he's been a live wire from the get-go. That's what's made him so effective as a catalyst and connection-maker: a mixture of boldness, enthusiasm and humor; a lightness of touch which promises and usually delivers good times.

That of course doesn't mean his life has been free of hardship. There was for instance one particularly rocky period between his departure from Cash's band and his arrival at MCA. In terms of events it was defined by the breakup of his troubled marriage with Cindy Cash and the end of his frustrating relationship with CBS. In terms of processes—well, you can probably imagine.

Marty can joke about it now ("It's like Roger Miller says: 'I looked up and buzzards were circling my career'"), but at the time he was in trouble. Fortunately he did something about it.

"I went to see my mother," he says. "My motto is 'When in doubt, go see Momma,' 'cause I'm a card-carrying Momma's boy. I said, 'Momma, what do I do?'"

"She said, 'Well, when you're tired and confused and off track'—and when she says 'off track', I know what that means—you stop and you listen and you go back



COURTESY WSM ARCHIVES



In his long career, Marty has hobnobbed with the greats. He's been touring since he was 13. Upper left, when he was just a kid with Lester Flatt; upper right, center stage at age 18, and later on with Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash and Roy Orbison.

"So I stopped and I listened, and I went back to the beginning, to Mississippi, and picked it up where I left it when I was 12 years old."

to the beginning.'

"So I stopped and I listened, and I went back to the beginning, to Mississippi, and picked it up where I left it when I was 12 years old. I found the way flowers smelled down there back then. I saw my old friends. I went to the woods where I used to walk with my grandpa, sat on his front porch. I knew I didn't belong there anymore, but I just stopped and was still.

"And I connected and I cleaned it all up. I got back in tune with the Big One; quit running my own show, and let the Big Spirit take over. I looked up and said, 'If you need me to go to Ethiopia and wash windows for You, and I'm supposed to ride a bicycle to do it, I'll do it as long as You approve of it. Now I'll leave You alone, and You send me the word. Keep the doors closed that need to be closed, and open the ones that should be open for me, 'cause I want to live my life and make You proud. The rest don't

matter."

Marty says that "from that very day on I walked forward unafraid," and good things just began to happen. "Shortly after that my old friends who play bluegrass gospel music, The Sullivans, came back into my life—they were the first group I worked with when I was 12—and I rode around with them on weekends, not preaching or pretending to be anything I wasn't, but just enjoying playing music and watching people be happy about themselves and hearing some pretty prayers, you know?"

Things continued to go along well, "and soon Paul Kennerley started coming around, and then Tony Brown started back into the picture." Kennerley, the renowned songwriter, gave "Hillbilly Rock" to Marty and wrote "Western Girls" with him. Tony Brown, an old acquaintance—he was playing piano for Elvis when Marty was with Lester Flatt—performed his function as head of



JACKIE SAUCON

When Marty played the Palomino Club in Los Angeles recently, producer Tony Brown, Lucinda Williams and Dwight Yoakam showed up for the gig.

Artists and Repertoire for MCA, signing Marty to the label and producing the *Hillbilly Rock* album along with guitarist/arranger/producer Richard Bennett, the man who played that outrageous neo-Duane Eddy guitar on Steve Earle's *Guitar Town*. "He's the guy who brought the twang back to Nashville," Marty says of Bennett. "He played the solo on 'Hillbilly Highway', which I think was the best song cut in Nashville in ten years. He's just a low-key guy who's a total monster."

The same team worked on *Tempted*, achieving a spirit very similar to that of their first album together and a style even more on the money. Thick and fast and muscular with Fenders, aching with fiddles and Marty's mountain mandolin, it's strong stuff: virtuosos working the edge with power, taste, finesse and feeling, running a gamut of songs from Bill Monroe to Neil Young (plus great new Kennerley/Kostas/Stuart tunes and the usual Johnny Cash number, this time "Blue Train") and slaying them all. *Tempted*, in fact, is something of a total monster itself. It's the first contemporary country album to do a superb job of playing to the marketplace—it delivers five or six killer mainstream radio hits—while also seizing the neglected reins of country's historically strongest stalking horses and making that buggy run. The bloodlines of all the really great movers are in this record: E.T. and his Texas Troubadors from the 1940's, Carl Perkins and Johnny Cash and his Tennessee Three from the 50's, Buck Owens and The Buckaroos from the 60's, Waylon and his Waylors from the 70's.

Marty himself is proud of *Tempted*, saying that "I think I've finally gotten heart and soul together in my music" and adding that his band, formed in time to

play on *Tempted*, has contributed mightily to that state of affairs. He lists them with pride: Larry Marris, King of the Hillbilly Bass Players ("He's like Don Rich to my Buck Owens"); certified limey and guitar-star-in-his-own-right, Rockin' Ray Flacke, on Telecaster; and on drums, the incomparable Dangerous Dave Durocher.

These guys don't look like a country band—they don't even *talk* country—but they lay waste to a honky tonk as quickly and totally as any outfit I've ever heard. Marty seconds that motion. "This band absolutely works. You can give this band *any* song, *any* place, and they'll eat it up, man. They're fearless. They'll get way out there on the limb where it cracks. That's the way I like to do it.

"And besides, they're real interesting to be around. It's like, on the bus, you'll have Ray and Dave playing chess and listening to classical music; you'll have Mike, our road manager, who's into heavy metal; and Larry Marris, his day don't start 'til he smokes a cigarette and listens to a Little Jimmy Dickens record."

He chortles. "Every one of us a misfit somewhere, right here where we belong. Fun, huh?"

The great old Tubb bus has transported us from Memphis, where among other things Marty observed the legendary echoes in the Sun Recording Studio (he always visits there), to Nashville, where during the last two days he has been nominated for another video award, has played guitar on a Travis Tritt record, has attended to business matters with his manager Bonnie Garner and has met Roy Rogers.

That last item was quite some occasion, a gathering of stars—Clint Black, Ricky Van Shelton, Emmylou Harris,

Roger Miller, Sweethearts of the Rodeo, Riders in the Sky, Tanya Tucker, Marie Osmond, Alan Jackson, a dozen others similarly stellar—to sing the chorus on a new recording of Roy's "Happy Trails to You."

Marty, of course, was in his element, putting people together, getting things going, telling stories and more than anything, being a fan. Maybe Bonnie Garner's affectionate prediction wasn't *exactly* on the money—"You watch," she laughed, "he'll show up with his Roy Rogers lunchbox"—but it was close: He'd been through his large, first-class collection of country music memorabilia (he has things like one of Hank Williams' guitars) and shown up with two items, a Stetson and a vintage movie poster, ready for the autograph of the King of the Cowboys.

He asked and received, and he got something extra and special: Roy knew who he was and told him he enjoys his songs and videos. So now, as he navigates his hard-used Cadillac around the alleyways behind Music Row ("A hillbilly music star *has* to have a Cadillac, you know"), he's feeling pretty privileged.

"I felt like a five-year-old, meeting Roy Rogers," he says. "That just totally made my year. But y'know, what a man. Think about it. What a campaign he's run. Anyone can be an outlaw, but it's awful hard to be a good guy."

He sounds like he knows what he's talking about on that last point, and maybe he really does, so I ask him how he feels about the campaign he himself is running.

"Well, being a sideman in Nashville, I've always felt like some of the things I did made a difference," he says. "Like the *Highwayman* record—I took that song to that project. When the video thing started up, I pulled the costume bit out of Nashville's closet and got that rolling. And now I think it's time to do that kind of thing on a larger scale. I want to make a difference in a bigger way now.

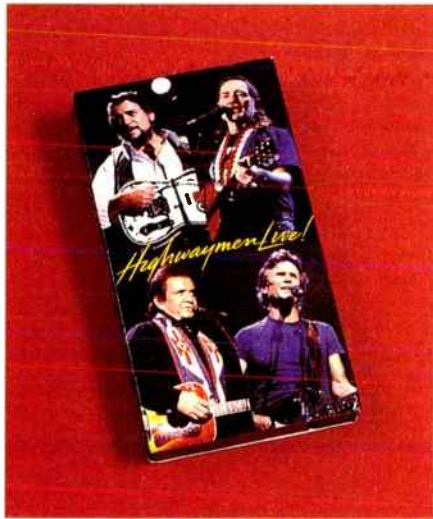
"You know, sometimes I feel like it's a crusade, or a mission: a crusade for hillbilly music. Materially I have some great tools: the Tubb bus, the closet full of Nudie suits, Hank's and Lester's and Clarence White's guitars, hit songs, fans. So materially, we're armed. But most of all I'm armed spiritually, because when I lay down and sleep at night, I feel real good. There's peace waiting on my pillow."

He glances through the windshield at the skyline of the city that's always had his heart and is now beginning to take some pride in that gift. "You know, I'm glad I got my spirit taken care of before any of the rest of it happened," he says matter-of-factly. "It'd be pretty worthless without that." ■

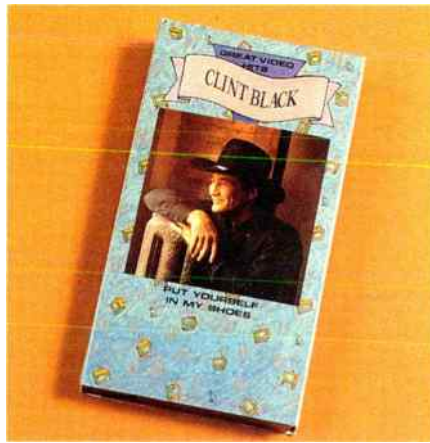
EDITOR'S CHOICE

HIGHWAYMEN LIVE!

Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Johnny Cash and Kris Kristofferson are four highly talented men—they are truly among the great stars (I hope you didn't miss the centerfold that featured them in the July/August issue of *Country Music*)! In 1984, these legendary performers collaborated on the album, *Highwaymen*. Never before had such legends of country music gathered for an album of this caliber. With the release of their second album in 1989, *Highwaymen 2*, these giants embarked on a historic tour. Between them, they are responsible for many of the biggest hits in country music history. Now, with their *Highwaymen Live!* video, filmed in 1990 at Long Island's Nassau Coliseum in New York State, you can capture them accompanying each other on 25 classic performances. Included on this special video are: "Highwayman," "Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys," "Trouble Man," "Amanda," "Ain't No Good (Chain Gang)," "Ring of Fire," "Folsom Prison



Blues," "Help Me Make it Through the Night," "Best of All Possible Worlds," "City of New Orleans," "Always on My Mind," "Silver Stallion," "Last Cowboy Song," "Living Legend," "They Killed Him," "Me and Bobby McGee," "Ragged Old Flag," "Are You Sure Hank Done it This Way," "Night Life," "Desperadoes Waiting For a Train," "Big River," "Boy Named Sue," "Why Me (Lord)," "Luckenbach, Texas" and "On the Road Again." In addition, *Highwaymen Live!* includes interview segments where The Highwaymen share their candid thoughts and tell anecdotes about each other and their music. *Highwaymen Live!* has already been declared a must-see video by fans and industry people alike. Approximately 98 minutes long, *Highwaymen Live!* sells for \$39.95, #V2A.

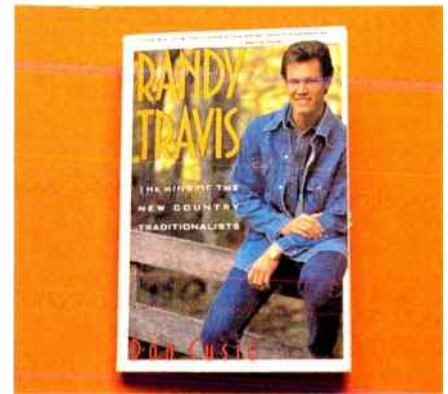


CLINT BLACK: PUT YOURSELF IN MY SHOES

I have to admit it—just as Hazel Smith has "an eye" for George Strait, I have "two eyes" for Clint Black! Many other warm-blooded women admire his great looks, cute physique and fabulous musical talent too! And now, not only are you able to listen to this wonderful man, but you can see him on his first compilation of video hits, *Put Yourself in My Shoes*. Clint's collection includes all his top-notch songs, among them: "Put Yourself in My Shoes," "Killin' Time," "A Better Man" and "Walkin' Away." You also get interview footage from *Country Music Video Magazine*, filmed in Disney World. Don't wait another day to see Clint's gorgeous smile and hear his fabulous voice! *Put Yourself in My Shoes* is only \$19.95, #V4M.

RANDY TRAVIS BIOGRAPHY

Something we've all been waiting for—a biography about one of the top country performers (and heartthrobs), Randy Travis! Randy has sold millions of records, won numerous country music awards, toured worldwide and is one of the youngest male performers ever invited to join the Grand Ole Opry—the idol of many. With a name and talent like his, you might think all the acclaim would go to his head, but not so! Randy will take all the time in the world to speak with anyone who passes his way. Now you are given the opportunity to meet this man through the biography, *Randy Travis*. You will learn about his childhood mischievousness, his plight with the courts, his growing success and his relationship with Lib Hatcher. You also get childhood and current photos of Randy and a discography. *Randy Travis* is 196 pages long and costs \$8.95, #B6F.

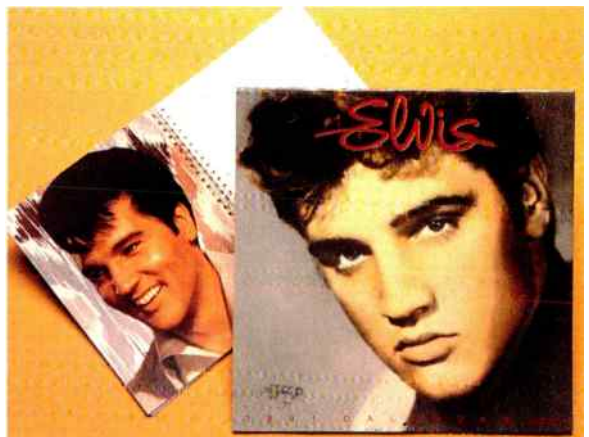


ELVIS 1991 CALENDAR AND ENGAGEMENT BOOK

Wow! Look at dreamy-eyed Elvis Presley captured on 12 months of the 1991 Elvis Wall Calendar. All 12 glossy, close-up pictures of Elvis are 12" x 12", and the entire calendar opens up to 12" x 24". Also, throughout the calendar are facts about Elvis' life and career. For example, do you know when Elvis performed four sold-out concerts at Madison Square Garden? Find out the answer on your Elvis 1991 Calendar.

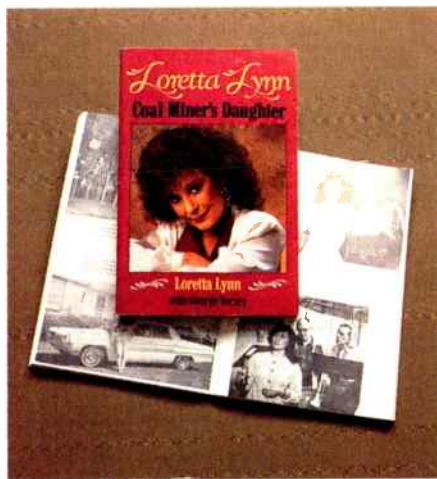
If you prefer engagement calendars, we have one for you, too! The 1991 Elvis Engagement Calendar is great for keeping track of your daily and weekly events. Each week starts you off with a striking 7" x 9" close-up of Elvis (55 total photos), while each page offers you plenty of space for writing seven days of notes. Also, in the back of the Engagement Calendar are pages for special dates

and important phone numbers. The 1991 Wall Calendar, #G5E, sold for \$9.95; now it's \$6.95—a savings of \$3! The 1991 Engagement Calendar, #G5A, was \$12.95, now \$9.95. Order both, #G5E/G5A, you'll get \$7 off the original \$20.90—both for only \$13.90. While they last!



LORETTA LYNN: COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER

Coal Miner's Daughter is a spectacular autobiography written by The Queen of Country Music, Loretta Lynn. Loretta expresses her true emotions in tell-it-like-it-is language, taking you back in time to experience her life from Butcher Holler, Kentucky, to present-day stardom. Loretta shares the depressed times she lived in—her father couldn't afford to buy her shoes, her mother had to insulate the walls with Sears catalog pages, and they'd go weeks eating only bread and gravy. Yet all these hardships brought her family closer together.



As Loretta continues her story, you'll find yourself captured by the emotions of a 13-year-old bride on her honeymoon night, the confusion of a deserted 14-year-old sent home pregnant, and the anger of a child, very close to her father when he died of black lung disease. In addition, Loretta goes into detail about her very close relationship with Patsy Cline and Patsy's influence on her life and career. As *Billboard Magazine* put it, "Few subjects are too personal to deal with here, yet there is nothing sensationalistic... Those reading this can be assured they have met the real Loretta Lynn." I agree.

When I started reading *Coal Miner's Daughter*, I could hardly put it down to eat or sleep. I felt every emotion of Loretta's. She told intimate moments of her life, drawing me in to share them. There I was, laughing and crying, just me and Loretta. *Coal Miner's Daughter* has been out of print for a while, but has been reissued now in a larger version with a new cover photo, larger type, bigger pages and better quality paper. Loretta also included a layout of her bus and her own 16-page photo album—fabulous pictures you can't afford to miss. Before this novelty book goes out of print again, I recommend buying it for its insightful content, its rare photos and its status as a collector's item. *Coal Miner's Daughter* sells for \$7.95, #B8W.



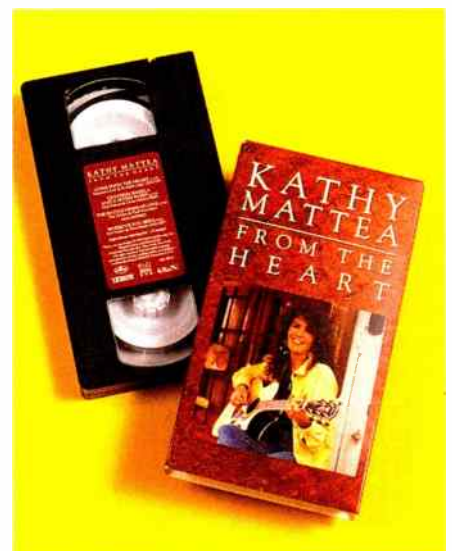
WEBB PIERCE: 1951-1958

No artist dominated country music in the 1950's as did Webb Pierce. He had thirteen Number One singles on the *Billboard* country music charts, while his nearest competitor, Eddy Arnold, had ten. Better yet, eight of Webb's songs were Number One on all three of the *Billboard* charts: best selling, disc jockey and juke box. In the 1950's, a total of 265 *Billboard* charts had a Pierce record at Number One.

Today, many remember Webb Pierce as a successful businessman and hillbilly showman whose guitar-shaped swimming pool and silver-studded automobile were premier tourist attractions. But who could forget his talent and the impact he had on the country music industry? So we were ecstatic when Bear Family issued this four-compact-disc boxed set, *Webb Pierce: 1951-1958*. This retrospective on Webb includes a 36-page booklet showing fabulous, rare photos of him and his friends, a description of his life and a very detailed discography. The four CD's combine 112 of Webb's songs, among them his 1950's Number One hits: "Back Street Affair," "It's Been So Long," "There Stands the Glass," "Slowly," "In the Jailhouse Now," "I Don't Care," "Love, Love, Love" and "Why Baby Why." *Webb Pierce: 1951-1958* also includes all of his other great songs, such as "Wondering," "The Last Waltz," "More and More," "Yes I Know Why," "That's Me Without You," "Broken Engagement," "We'll Find a Way" and plenty more! *Webb Pierce: 1951-1958* sells for \$89.95, #BCD15522. See Rich Kienzle's review (January/February 1991 issue, *Country Music*).

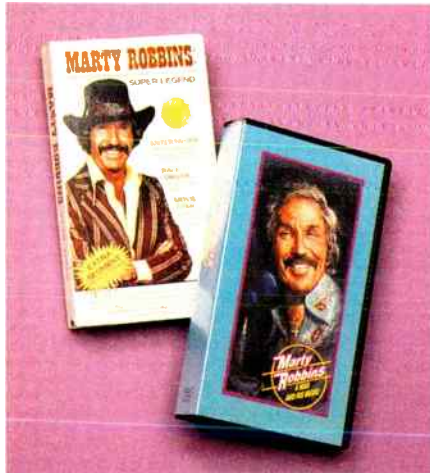
KATHY MATTEA: FROM THE HEART

Kathy Mattea is the reigning Country Music Association and Academy of Country Music Female Vocalist of the Year. Having been raised in West Virginia, Kathy has down-home country manners—they are a key element in her personality. The first time I met Kathy she acted like we were old friends. It's rare to find someone so compassionate, friendly and sincere when first being introduced. These qualities shine through Kathy's music and help make her fabulous video, *From the Heart*, so outstanding. Some of Kathy's biggest hit singles are featured on her video, including: "Where've You Been," "The Battle Hymn of Love," "Come From the Heart" and "18 Wheels and a Dozen Roses." *From the Heart* also includes a behind-the-scenes profile of Kathy and enlightening interview footage. *From the Heart* costs only \$9.95, #V7F.



MARTY ROBBINS VIDEOS

If you like Marty Robbins, you'll love these videos: *Super Legend* and *A Man and His Music*. The two-hour video, *Super Legend*, features 18 performances and includes Marty's Grammy-winning song, "My Woman, My Woman, My Wife." Additionally, you see interviews with Marty's family and individuals who played a major role in his career, from Little Jimmy



Dickens to Roy Acuff. The tape also includes exciting clips from his racing career and rare appearances from early television shows and the big screen. This is our number-one selling video. It is hot! Other performances include: "El Paso," "White Sport Coat," "Devil Woman," "Ribbon of Darkness," "Singing the Blues," "I Couldn't Keep From Crying," "Don't Worry 'Bout Me" and more.

Now for a *Man and His Music*. Marty Robbins always made it his business to be different. This often baffled the industry "big wigs," but it never failed to please his fans. When Marty did step in front of his audience, he knew how to make everyone have a good time—just "funnin' around," as he put it. And that is exactly what has been captured for you on this 55-minute video, *A Man and His Music*, taped during a concert at the Grand Ole Opry. You'll hear such favorites as "Ribbon of Darkness," "A White Sport Coat," "Devil Woman," "Big Iron," "Don't Worry," "That's Alright Mama," "Among My Souvenirs," "My Woman, My Woman, My Wife" and "El Paso." This video is one of the top-sellers in *Country Music Magazine*, and it shouldn't be missed. Rich Kienzle reviewed both of these Marty Robbins videos in *Essential Collector* (July/August 1990 issue, *Country Music*) and raved about them. Ronnie Robbins, Marty's son, is ecstatic over the continued support his father's fans have shown as demonstrated by the tremendous sales of these videos. You definitely get great entertainment and collector's items when you order these classics. *Super Legend*, #G2A, and *A Man and His Music*, #G1G, sell for only \$39.95 each.

DIAMOND CHIP WATCH

Move over, Gucci! Here is a gorgeous, 24-karat, gold-layered watch with a *real diamond*! We have proudly displayed our *Country Music Magazine* logo in gold, contrasting nicely with the black face and pebble-grain, genuine leather strap. The diamond and gold-color hour, minute and second hands add a handsome touch to the highly accurate, quartz electronic analog movement. This watch is so handsome that Tony Bunting, a Vice President of *Country Music Magazine*, wears it daily, and I must say it looks sharp! The *Country Music* diamond watch is for both men and women and only costs \$19.95, #G4L.



THE BEST OF MERLE TRAVIS

Merle Travis, inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1977, was a magnificently talented artist who introduced his unique guitar-picking style to the rest of the world. Rich Kienzle describes Merle as "country music's Renaissance Man."

A number of Merle's 1940 hit records are outstanding honky tonk performances, particularly "Divorce Me C.O.D." and "Three Times Seven." And other Travis

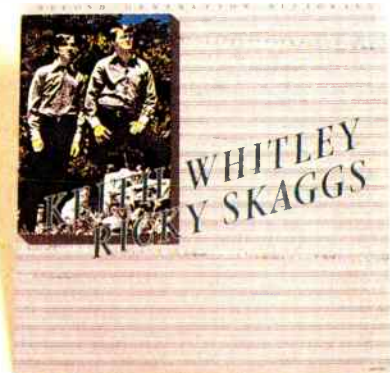


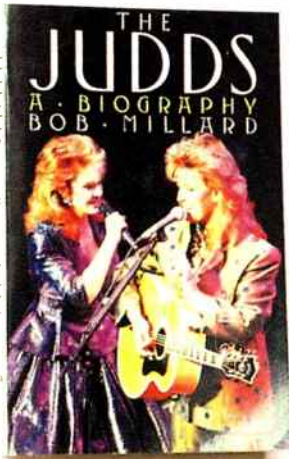
compositions, such as "Dark as a Dungeon" and "Sixteen Tons," are considered American classics. In addition to these songs, *The Best of Merle Travis* includes: "Cincinnati Lou," "No Vacancy," "Sweet Temptation," "So Round, So Firm, So Fully Packed," "Steel Guitar Rag," "I Am a Pilgrim," "Lawdy, What a Gal," "Fat Gal," "I Like My Chicken Fryin' Size," "When My Baby Double-Talks to Me," "Trouble, Trouble," "Kinfolks in Carolina," "Re-Enlistment Blues" and "Cannon Ball Rag." *The Best of Merle Travis* is another big seller in *Country Music Magazine* (see Rich Kienzle's review, September/October 1990 issue, *Country Music*). You don't want to miss out on all of Merle's greatest performances offered in one spot. Available on CD and cassette only, the CD sells for \$14.98 and the cassette for \$9.98, #R70993. An important note: only the CD includes the four bonus tracks, "When My Baby Double-Talks to Me," "Trouble, Trouble," "Kinfolks in Carolina" and "Cannon Ball Rag."

KEITH WHITLEY AND RICKY SKAGGS: SECOND GENERATION BLUEGRASS

Ricky Skaggs holds a special place in his heart for Keith Whitley—as do so many others! Ricky knew Keith for a long time. As teenagers they played in Ralph Stanley's band, *The Clinch Mountain Boys*—Keith on guitar and vocals and Ricky on mandolin, fiddle and vocals.

In 1971, in Clinton, Maryland, Whitley and Skaggs recorded their *Second Generation Bluegrass* album, which has been reissued. *Second Generation Bluegrass* includes: "Don't Cheat in Our Hometown," "Dream of a Miner's Child," "Memories of Mother," "Poor Monroe," "Daybreak in Dixie," "All I Ever Loved Was You," "My Deceitful Heart," "Son of Hobert," "Sea of Regret," "Those Two Blue Eyes," "Wildwood Flower" and "This Weary Heart You Stole Away." Just think, 12 years later Ricky Skaggs took "Don't Cheat in Our Hometown" to Number One. Weren't they two talented younguns! Rich Kienzle confirms, "For fans of both, this one's both entertaining and enlightening as a look at their musical roots 20 years ago." (November/December issue, *Country Music*) *Second Generation Bluegrass* is available on CD and cassette only. CD costs \$18.98 and cassette costs \$9.98, #Rebel/1504.



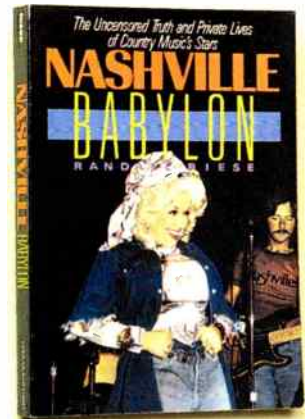
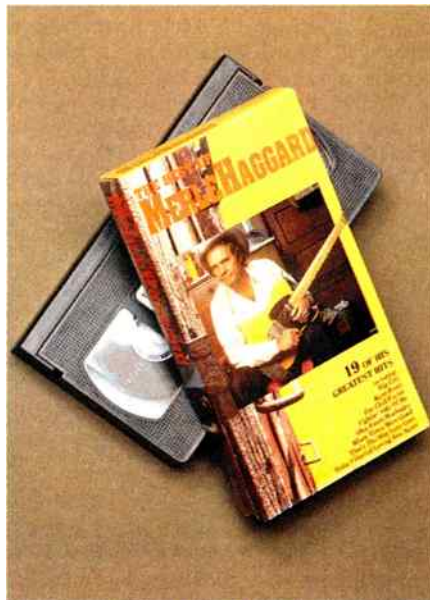


THE JUDDS

Wynonna Judd has a smile like Elvis Presley's, a voice comparable to Patsy Cline's and a vocal style all her own. Wynonna and her mother, Naomi, The Judds, have become the hottest country music duo singing today. Not only are they great entertainers—Wynonna and Naomi have brought happiness and hope into many people's lives. While reading letters sent to the Editor of *Country Music*, I come across many emotional and heart-warming stories of readers who have experienced The Judds' warmth and feeling, often uplifting them through tragic events. Now you can read about this hot duo, including how they had to struggle to make it big in the country music industry. Their climb took perseverance and great talent. *The Judds* is our number-one, best-selling book. Its 206 pages contain plenty of photos, and it only costs \$8.95, #B4A. *The Judds* is out of print, but there are a limited number of copies still in circulation. So order now, and don't miss out on this collector's item!

THE BEST OF MERLE HAGGARD VIDEO

Clint Black admires Merle Haggard's style and talents, and so do the rest of us here at *Country Music*. This great artist/singer/songwriter/guitar player has been captured on his video, *The Best of Merle Haggard*. As Hag puts it—"I have selected some of my favorite songs for this video... and I hope they will be your favorites too." *The Best of Merle Haggard* was recorded live in concert in Concord, California and includes 19 of his greatest hits: "My Favorite Memory," "Stay Here and Drink," "Mama's Hungry Eyes," "Today I Started Loving You Again," "Old Man From the Mountains," "Kern River," "If I Could Only Fly," "When Times Were Good," "Honky Tonk Night Time Man," "Ida Red," "Big City," "Okie From Muskogee," "Footlights" and many more. This top-selling, one-hour video costs only \$19.95, #G3E. See Rich Kienzle's review in *Essential Collector* (May/June 1990 issue, *Country Music*).



NASHVILLE BABYLON

Nashville Babylon brings the private lives and secret lies of country music's most notorious characters out of the closet and bedroom and into the spotlight. Extensively illustrated with revealing photographs, this is a fascinating collection. If you are curious about the deaths, marriages, adulteries, prison-mates, drugs and murders that surround some of the best-known country music stars, you'll love this book. You get to read stories about Barbara Mandrell's life-threatening accident, Johnny Cash's struggle to overcome drug addiction, Loretta Lynn's psychic powers, Tammy Wynette's unfortunate marriages, the grisly murder of Opry star, Stringbean, and how Spade Cooley killed his own wife, to name a few. To quote Jerry Lee Lewis, "You scared of me? You should be. Why do you think they call me the Killer?" This fascinating, behind-the-scenes look at Nashville, its music and its stars, stars whose lives are often more lurid than lyrics they record, is entertainment at its best. This 275-page book sells for \$12.95, #B4C.

NASHVILLE WAREHOUSE EDITOR'S CHOICE

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Letters

Move over Big Bird—Here's Travis

Once again, you've totally amazed me. I thought the January/February 1990 issue featuring Randy Travis was excellent; however, you've really outdone yourselves with the March/April 1991 issue. It's the best I've ever seen. The photos are perfect. For those of you who haven't caught Randy on *Sesame Street*, he does an excellent job there too—move over Big Bird!

Kim Hekele
Claflin, Kansas

Breathtaking Travis

The cover picture of Randy Travis on the March/April issue is simply breathtaking, and the article is—I just can't find the right words that would be more than "great." It was the best yet! The story of Randy's USO Tour made my eyes water and heart tingle.

Randy is the best and has changed not only my life, but many others' as well. Someday his grandson will think that "He Walked on Water." Congratulations for a job well done!

Darlene Powers
Indianapolis, Indiana

Subscribes for Travis

I've been a Randy Travis fan longer than I've subscribed to *Country Music Magazine*, and I've paid dearly for not subscribing sooner. My subscription started after the January/February 1990 issue with Randy Travis on the cover. I want to thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for the cover story on him in this March/April issue. My daughter, who is also a committed Randy Travis fan, found the March/April issue first and left it open for me to read when I got home from work.

It's a great cover picture of Randy. I plan to frame it!

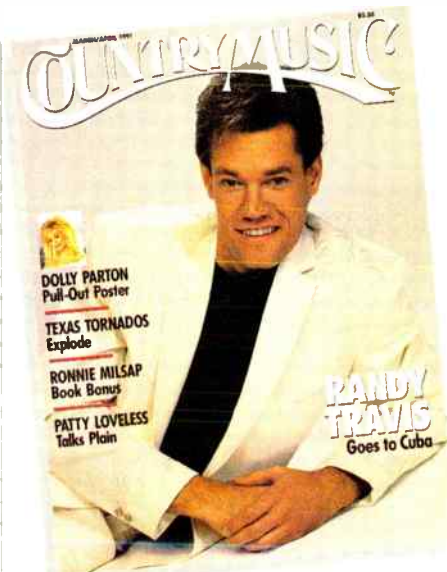
Cheryl Leidy
Williamsburg, Pennsylvania

Navy Switches Sides?

In response to the photo of Randy Travis signing autographs on page 32 in the March/April issue: Having spent 20 years as a career Navy man, I was surprised to see the change of rating designation on the uniform from left shoulder to right and ribbon location from left breast to right! Also, I thought Randy Travis was right-handed!

Larry Reichard
North Perry, Ohio

Due to a production error, the photo was flopped. The publisher has ordered more executions (see Letters last issue).—Ed.



Young and Old Want Travis

Your cover story on Randy Travis in the March/April issue was great. It really makes a person realize how down-to-earth he is. People expect so much from Randy, but he needs time to himself—as the rest of us do. A few weeks ago Randy was on TNN. It was so cute—a 100-year-old woman wanted to hug Randy and, boy, did she. She didn't want to let him go. It's great to see such a wide range of age groups like him. The picture of Randy on the cover of *Country Music Magazine* is so sexy! Good job!

Kathy Wark
Westerville, Ohio

Garth's Honesty Applauded

Thanks so much for the cover story on Garth Brooks in the January/February issue. The article was so interesting that I read it twice! My friends in the Tampa, Florida, area say that Garth puts on one of the best shows they have ever seen, and he is one of the nicest men you'll ever meet! Garth is definitely unique! I admire him for the relationship he has with his wife, Sandy. It's good to see someone famous who is not afraid to be proud of their spouse in public. I applaud Garth for his honesty, kindness and music.

Nancy Ledford
Brunswick, Georgia

Gracious Garth

Hooray! Finally a cover story on Garth Brooks! Three cheers to Bob Millard for an informative, perceptive piece! As much as I adore Clint Black, it was very frustrating to see his intense, incredible start some-

what overshadow the equally deserving talent of Garth Brooks. I've since heard interviews with both parties concerning this particular subject, and it's refreshing to note that the competition has not only produced four fantastic albums between them, but a friendship as well.

An open plea to Garth: Perhaps the greatest factor of your appeal is your unassuming, sincere manner. On that wonderful, unpretentious night in Nashville (when you were inducted into the Grand Ole Opry) you weren't ashamed to cry, and your being at a loss for words was indicative of your heartfelt gratitude. That single attribute is the foundation for your every song and sentiment. Please don't ever lose it!

Allison J. Dunne
West Islip, New York

Cowboy Praises Brooks

After reading the article on Garth Brooks in the January/February issue, I feel I must write in defense of the "honky tonk cowboy" whom Garth helped when his truck was stuck in a mud puddle in Texas. That "honky tonk cowboy" called our local radio station, KPLX, the next day and told all the Dallas/Ft. Worth listeners how great Garth was to help him out. He had nothing but praise for Garth and his band members.

Sherry Lycan
Mesquite, Texas

Centerfold Puts Strait Ahead

Thank you, thank you, thank you for the super-great centerfold of George Strait in the January/February issue. I thought the first centerfold of him in the September/October 1989 issue was great, and it is. I have both it and the new one hanging on my wall at work, but the new one is unlike any picture of him I've seen—it is really special. Does Hazel Smith have any say in picking centerfolds? Ha! She and I certainly agree on George's good looks.

Patricia Ford
Bowie, Texas

Incredible George Strait

Thanks for having that incredibly handsome, sexy, cute George Strait as your centerfold in your January/February issue. You mentioned him winning the CMA Entertainer of the Year award twice in a row, but you didn't mention that he also won last year's ACM Entertainer of the Year.

Gloria Smith
Claremore, Oklahoma



Stephanie Bolton, Dolly Parton and Crystal Coggins at Dollywood.

"Purty" Dolly

I just wanted to take the time to thank you for the March/April pull-out poster of Dolly Parton. I am a big fan of Dolly's, and as you can see, my best "Dolly" friend and I got to meet Dolly recently. She is the nicest, sweetest and "purtiest" person we ever met!

Stephanie Bolton
Calhoun, Georgia

Refreshing Patty Loveless

Hats off to Patrick Carr for the great article on Patty Loveless in the March/April issue. This was a refreshing interview that didn't sound like a record company's press release! I always enjoy Mr. Carr's interviews.

As for Patty being worried about putting out any negative feelings—don't be! I thought she was a great singer and performer just being honest with us about the pressures and realities behind the scenes. If Patty decides to cut back on touring and raise a family, I would still buy every album she makes!

Tony Mellichampe
Edgewater, Maryland

World's Best Yodeler

Thanks for the addresses on the New England country music organizations and the picture of Yodeling Slim Clark in the November/December 1990 *CMSA Newsletter*. Through one of the addresses I was able to get Slim's address and send him a card. Much to my surprise, I received one back. When I was a teenager in New Hampshire, I would go to all of his shows and listen to him on the radio. In my opinion, he is the world's best yodeler.

Alberta Moore
Sarasota, Florida

Take Me Home, Texas Tornados

Thank you for helping me get over being homesick for my home state of Texas. Due to my husband's military duties, we live in New Jersey. We both miss the country music scene of Austin and other cities. 20 Questions with Doug Sahm of The Texas Tornados in the March/April issue brought back lots of great memories of all the singers and bands mentioned.

Marcy Lee Hickman
Austin, Texas

Live On, Texas Tornados

Viva los Tornados de Tejas! Thanks to Michael Bane for the 20 Questions with Doug Sahm in the March/April issue. It's a super group like The Texas Tornados that captures the unrestrained, vibrant spirit of the Austin music scene. From "Mendocino" to "Poison Love" and "Is Anybody Going to San Antone?," Doug Sahm has always been on the threshold of deserved superstardom. He even recruited Bob Dylan for vocals on one of his "assemblage of stars" albums.

The Texas Tornados are unique.

Randy Pierce
Belleville, Illinois

Milsap's Heaven-Sent

Ronnie Milsap not only has a super spirit of survival, he has a beautiful spirit akin to the angels, and it comes through when he sings. He has to be heaven-sent to be able to sing and smile all the time, after all that inhumane treatment he received. God bless you, Ronnie.

Bernice Yust Dack
McCook, Nebraska

Milsap Deepens Life's Meaning

Thanks so much for the book bonus from Ronnie Milsap's autobiography, *Almost Like a Song*, in the March/April issue. After reading Ronnie's book, I personally have found a deeper meaning to life. During a recent concert in Ft. Worth, Texas, my son and I were privileged to meet Ronnie's wife, Joyce. It was Ronnie's birthday, and we brought him a special birthday cake. Joyce met us after the concert and thanked us. Ronnie and Joyce Milsap are truly wonderful—caring and sincere in their love for their fans.

Donna Ashworth
Dallas, Texas



The cake Ronnie Milsap received in Fort Worth. He turned 47 on January 16th.

Enjoyed Tucker Feature

The article on Tanya Tucker in the January/February issue of *Country Music* is most enjoyable. Although Patrick Carr's reference to Tanya and Glen Campbell's marriage was in error, he still managed to get past the "party-girl" label to reveal the talented entertainer who is loyal to her

family, gracious to her fans and serious about her music. May she have many more successful years in the spotlight.

Richard Kellogg
Alfred, New York

Patrick corrected the error in our last issue.—Ed.



Eldon Shamblin, Dayna Wills and Johnny Gimble in Ruidoso, New Mexico.

Instrumentalist of the Year

I recently had the pleasure of meeting and performing with Johnny Gimble and some of the former Texas Playboys at the First Annual Cowboy Symposium in Ruidoso, New Mexico. As you know, Johnny Gimble won the award for Instrumentalist of the Year at the CMA Awards Show in October. I want to know why the musicians are never shown on the telecast? If it weren't for these people, there would be no one to receive an award at all!

Dayna Wills
Stockton, California

Chet Atkins' Beautiful Music

Thank you so very much for such a delightful story about Chet Atkins in the January/February issue. His music has been a great and beautiful part of my life for almost 50 years—the most beautiful music this side of heaven. I have preserved, by re-recording, his tapes that he cut 20 or 25 years ago. They are all (old and new) precious to me. I hope Chet and I live to be 100 years old—with his beautiful music to listen to.

I also like Chet's vocals, especially "I Can Hear Kentucky Calling Me."

Elinora DeWeese
Joplin, Missouri

Great Instrumentalist—Chet Atkins

It was a pleasant surprise to see the feature article and record review on Chet Atkins in the January/February issue. It is unfortunate that the majority of today's press chooses to focus so little attention on instrumental talents like Mr. Atkins. After all, these musicians contribute their talents to so many artists' albums, as well as having their own solo careers. Don't they deserve some attention?

Michelle Aldredge
Snellville, Georgia

For more on great instrumentalists, see the CMM update on Johnny Gimble in this issue.—Ed.

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Then, *1971* introduces the incomparable Dolly Parton performing two of her bests—*Coat of Many Colors* and *Joshua*. You'll hear the magical team of Loretta Lynn and Conway Twitty on *After the Fire Is Gone* and Charley Pride in his *Kiss an Angel Good Morning*.

And there's so much more. Classic hits by Willie Nelson, Flatt and Scruggs, Connie Smith, Hank Williams, Merle Haggard, Eddy Arnold, Chet Atkins, Waylon Jennings, Tammy Wynette, Tom T. Hall, Mel Tillis, Lynn Anderson, Sonny James, Tanya Tucker. Album by album, year by year...you'll enjoy all your favorite stars singing their greatest hits!

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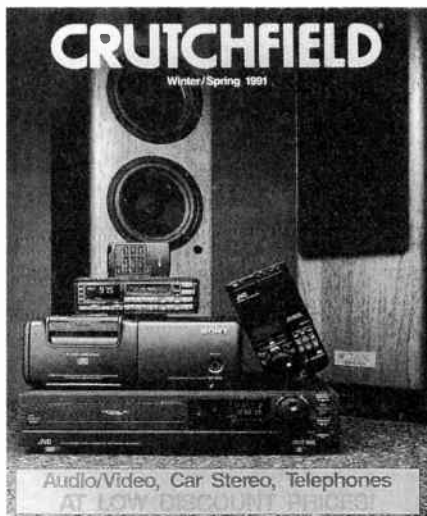
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Love Don Williams

I was so thrilled to see 20 Questions with Don Williams in the January/February issue of *Country Music Magazine*! Thank you so much—my husband and I love him. We were honored to see Don in concert in Anaheim, California. We now live in Virginia and are anxious to see him again. Does he have a fan club?

Brenda Brooks

Newport News, Virginia

Don Williams' fan club address: c/o Don Williams Enterprises, 15 Music Square West, Nashville, TN 37203.—Ed.

Ricky Van Tops

Thank you, thank you, thank you for the beautiful review of my favorite person and singer, Ricky Van Shelton, in the Editor's Choice ad of the March/April issue. I have his video, *To Be Continued...*, and I watch it over and over. If more reviewers would see this video, they would agree 100% with the Editor's Choice ad. I have been to nine of his concerts, saw him at Fan Fair and the Grand Ole Opry, and he has been so sweet and friendly. Ricky's music and friendliness brought me out of my shell.

Lauretta Henry

Shadyside, Ohio

More Female Centerfolds

Last night I received the last issue due me on my subscription to *Country Music Magazine*. I want to assure you I am definitely renewing. My favorite section, aside from Buried Treasures, is People written by Hazel Smith. That woman is brilliant.

I do have one small complaint, however. It's obvious that a majority of your readers are women because you hardly have any female pull-out posters. Granted, the male posters you've had are the finest of the new-blood country performers. The fact remains that I cannot have posters of handsome cowboys on the wall of my cell. I've got a reputation to maintain in here. So come on, how about some pretty lady posters for a change? Lord knows, country music has plenty of them!

Jesse Turner

Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

Dolly Parton in the March/April issue okay with you?—Ed.

Love that Hazel Smith

This Iowa lady loves Hazel Smith's reporting and can hardly wait to read the People section when I get *Country Music Magazine*. Thank you for keeping us all up-to-date on so much. I love it when Hazel tells us who she sees at a party, and especially at the grocery store or restaurant.

Lynda Barnhart

West Branch, Iowa

Clint's All in the Family

Thank you so much for the great pull-out poster of Clint Black in the November/

December issue. My step-sister is Clint's cousin, and I had the chance to meet him after his concert in Monroe, Louisiana. I must say, Clint is not only a wonderful singer, he is one of the nicest people I have ever met. I'm glad to see that success has not gone to his head, and that he is as down-to-earth as his family said he's always been. His smile is not all he is famous for—he has a great personality to match!

Lisa Jones

Crossett, Arkansas

Forever Judds

Wynonna Judd made two young fans extremely happy when she took a few minutes to say hello at a concert in Memphis, Tennessee. Five-year-old Courtney Bagwell and eight-year-old Laura Hendrix had looked forward to seeing The Judds concert for weeks! Wynonna made their night complete when she gave them a hug and let them have a picture taken with her. The girls will remember that night for the rest of their lives and will forever be Judd fans!

Dee Hendrix

Memphis, Tennessee



Courtney Bagwell, Wynonna Judd and Laura Hendrix in Memphis.

Mom Gadd Corrects Pix

I always read the People section in *Country Music Magazine* first, before the stories. I love the way Hazel Smith phrases things. Thanks for writing about Wild Rose in the People section of the March/April issue, and for printing a picture of them. It seems funny to see them referred to as an "all girl band" when they're all young ladies in their 30's! Also, their names were in the wrong order! Clockwise around Stroud, they are Wanda Vick, Kathy Mack, my daughter—Pam Gadd—with her chin on James Stroud's head, Pam Perry and Nancy Given Prout.

Carol Gadd

Burlington, Kentucky

Whatever Happened to Narvel Felts?

I would like to know what happened to Narvel Felts. I saw him in person many times in Clearwater, Florida (where I lived for 30 years). I have all of his albums, all signed by him. Narvel has a voice that cannot be duplicated. Is he still singing, making appearances, etc?

Tina Coley

Rudolph, Ohio

Narvel Felts fans, come in, please.—Ed.

Randy Travis/Lefty Frizzell

I was brought up in Washington State and Oregon. In 1950 I saw Lefty Frizzell in Toulie Lake, California, at the Red Barn. I also saw Sheb Wooley, The Maddox Brothers and Rose and Jean Shepard. When I first heard Randy Travis, I thought he was Lefty Frizzell.

In 1956 I moved to Massachusetts and lost track of all the country singers I had records of (1948-1955)—Kitty Wells, Carl Smith, Loretta Lynn. I remember when Loretta was singing from a small radio station in the Seattle area. What happened to Lefty Frizzell? Does Randy ever sing any of Lefty's songs?

Georgia Correia

North Falmouth, Massachusetts
Lefty Frizzell died in 1975. So far, Randy has not recorded any of his songs.—Ed.

Strait to Saudi Arabia

I am a U.S. Marine with 1st Force Recon. As I am writing this, I have been in Saudi Arabia for eight months. I wanted to tell you how great George Strait is. I have written him a few times to tell him how much his music motivates me and helps to close the miles from home. Mr. Strait has always written back and even sent two autographed pictures. I think it is really great when an entertainer as big as George Strait takes the time to support the troops in Saudi Arabia.

Sgt. Randy Lee

FPO San Francisco, California

Support for Serviceman

I am currently serving in the Persian Gulf aboard the battleship *Wisconsin*. I thought that if I could get a letter to you, I could tell the country music family how much I appreciate them.

First of all, *Country Music Magazine* is a little piece of heaven out here. It keeps me in touch with what I love most—country music. Second, I am a member of The Charlie Daniels Band fan club. They have sent me gifts for Christmas. I have also received letters from other members of the fan club—thanks to Charlie and his staff. And lastly, before I came over here, I started writing to a lady named Dawn through the Pen Pals section of the *CMSA Newsletter*—she has really helped a lot.

Erik Armitage

FPO New York, New York

A Taste for Chesnutt

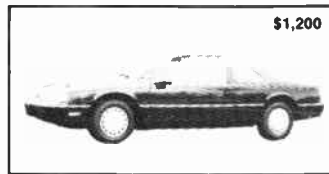
I am very disappointed in Rich Kienzle's review of Mark Chesnutt's album, *Too Cold at Home*, in the March/April issue. Either Kienzle's taste is off or he has wax in his ears. Saying Mark's voice doesn't fit the image has got to be the dumbest thing I've ever read. Chesnutt's voice is pure country gold. Chesnutt does some real singing on this album, and it deserves a lot more credit. He is the greatest thing since George Strait.

Tracy Ethridge

Lake Arthur, Louisiana

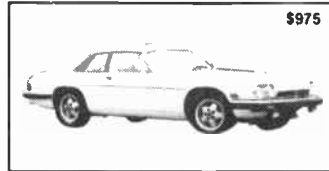
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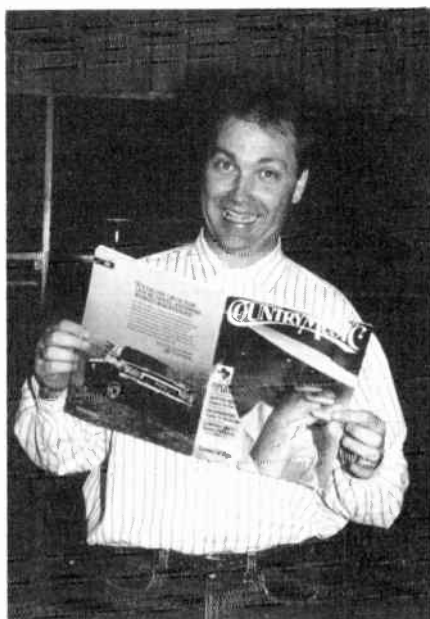
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Steve Wariner and Garth Brooks can't take their eyes off *Country Music Magazine's* November/December 1990 issue. Photos courtesy of Iowa's own Dennis Devine.

Chesnutt Pulls Well

In the March/April issue of *Country Music*, Rich Kienzle wrote a very poor record review on Mark Chesnutt's album, *Too Cold at Home*. I guess Kienzle didn't attend the New Year's Party at The Summit in Houston, or didn't hear Mark at Willie's Night Life in Houston, or maybe I should tell you how 54,000 people at the Houston Livestock Rodeo gave him a standing ovation. I am really upset, but I will try hard to understand a person who cuts down someone as sweet as Mark. He is just like George Strait was 11 years ago. Just look where "Brother Jukebox" and "Too Cold at Home" went.

M.L. Clark
Houston, Texas

On Target with Gill

Thanks, Rich Kienzle, for an excellent review of Vince Gill's album, *Pocket Full of Gold*, in the March/April issue. You were almost right on target—I think this album far exceeds his last album, *When I Call Your Name*. There are eight really great songs. I definitely got my money's worth. How about a Vince Gill pull-out poster? This guy is so incredibly good-looking and nice.

Ms. Monty Tinch
Enterprise, Alabama

In Defense of White Hat Acts

In response to Rich Kienzle's record review of Aaron Tippin's album, *You've Got to Stand for Something*, in the March/April issue, I was upset to see that he could say such awful things about "white hat acts." First of all, George Strait and Garth Brooks don't always wear white hats—they do wear black ones. Second, I read somewhere that Clint Black cannot stand white hats. There is nothing wrong with a "hat act." But don't get me wrong, I absolutely love the album, *You've Got to Stand for Something*.

Jessica Foster
Seguin, Texas

Hot Stuart Review

I'm writing in response to Bob Allen's record review of Marty Stuart's album, *Tempted*, in the March/April issue. Believe every word the man says! I tend to lean more toward traditionalists such as Clint Black, but my four-year-old son loved the song "Hillbilly Rock," so I bought the cassette. I was impressed with the tape and surprised there wasn't more air play, but didn't think much about it. Then, Marty Stuart was scheduled to play near me in February, so in January I bought *Tempted*. First play of this tape I fell in love with it and couldn't wait until his concert. My husband went as well as my neighbors, who weren't thrilled about seeing a man they say dresses like a...well, you get the picture.

The concert was extremely high energy, and the next day my husband and neighbors did nothing but sing the praises of Marty Stuart. I would love to see a feature on him in your magazine.

Dawna Kern
Pedley, California

How about this issue?—Ed.

Agrees on Marty Stuart

I couldn't resist writing to applaud Bob Allen for his record review of Marty Stuart's album *Tempted*, in the March/April issue. I agree wholeheartedly with Bob on the *Hillbilly Rock* album and am in complete agreement on *Tempted*. These are the two best pieces of music I own. The Johnny Cash flavor, the touch of Waylon and the pinch of bluegrass are all a mixture of the music I loved while growing up. Marty adds impressively to this music and comes up with his own unique style. You all can have the fellas with the hats—I'll take Marty and his "near-misses" over other "first-picks" anytime.

Roxanne Johnston
Hibbing, Minnesota

Impeccable K.T. Oslin

Wow! Bob Millard sure hit the mark with his review of K.T. Oslin's album, *Love in a Small Town*, in the March/April issue. It is indeed a performance album by an impeccable artist. I salute Bob's insight and appreciation. I dare you to go see her in concert—you will be K.T.'d forever!

Jan P. Weaver
Chicago, Illinois

Time Will Tell for Mary Chapin

It has been my contention that critics criticize other people's work because they have no real talent of their own. This belief was proved true once again by Bob Millard's review of Mary Chapin Carpenter's album, *Shooting Straight in the Dark*, in the January/February issue. I think that if Millard had spent half as much time listening to the album as he spent thinking up clever ways to poor-mouth it, he might have changed his mind.

I bought this album despite Millard's review, and it gets better every time I listen to it. Time will tell the tale.

C.J. Singleton
Conesville, Iowa

Criticism Unwarranted

Bang! Bang! Bob Millard. You can't fool me. Your criticism of Randy Travis' album, *Heroes and Friends*, reviewed in the January/February issue, and the remark about it being career filler—what a joke! My ears are clean, how about yours? I love every song on this album. As far as I'm concerned, it has 13 Number One hits. I know it must have taken a lot of hard work and love on the part of Randy and all the other participating artists.

Frances Basden
Burlington, North Carolina



Leonard Mendelson, Associate Publisher of *Country Music Magazine*, really gets around—now it's New Zealand, no less! Here's Leonard with Gray Bartlett, Jodi Vaughan and Brendan Dugan, who make up New Zealand's top country music group, *Together Again*. Leonard says country music is "alive and well in New Zealand."

Sweethearts North of the Border

I am one of *Country Music Magazine's* very satisfied subscribers north of the border, and I was recently fortunate enough to have been selected as Canadian Vice President of the Sweethearts of the Rodeo fan club. Their CBS album, *Buffalo Zone*, has been a great success. We Sweetheart fans would appreciate a feature article on Janis and Kristine, and as you can see, they are definitely of centerfold quality.

Fred Letain
Dauphin, MB, Canada



Fred Letain with Janis Gill and Kristine Arnold of Sweethearts of the Rodeo.

Mean-Spirited Review

I have a few comments about the review of Randy Travis' album, *Heroes and Friends*, in the January/February issue. Mr. Millard, being shot would be too easy! You can't say those things about Randy and just walk away. Randy has never wasted one ounce of his God-given talent, and the "true" fans know this. This album holds great meaning for me, and I know it means even more to Randy. Are you aware that Roy Rogers had surgery shortly after the release of *Heroes and Friends*? I'm sure if something had gone wrong (God forbid), Randy would have held that duet more dear than money from more record sales!

Kimberly Smith
Ash, North Carolina

Relieved by Heroes Review

I was very relieved to read the review of Randy Travis' new album, *Heroes and Friends*, in the January/February issue. I thought I was nuts for a while and was the only person in the world who was disappointed in this album. Needless to say, I'm hoping that Randy has gotten some good advice (vs. that of Ms. Hatcher) and is running, not walking, back to the studio to give us what we really want—just Randy singing.

Sherry Webb
Canyon Country, California

Yoakam Review Ruffles Fan

Many thanks to *Country Music Magazine* for the services you have provided the country music audience these many years. In the 20 years I've spent in radio, playing virtually every form of music imaginable, there is no publication that serves its readers as you do yours.

However, I must admit to having my feathers ruffled by Rich Kienzle's review of Dwight Yoakam's album, *If There Was a Way*, in the January/February issue. Rich Kienzle complained about Dwight including his re-make of Canned Heat's song, "Let's Work Together." I'm not quite sure Kienzle's pointed remark, "like incense burning in a honky tonk," was entirely warranted. Rich, when are you making your next album?

Dave Machen
Packer 99-5 WPKR
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Mean-Spirited Review

I found Rich Kienzle's review of Dwight Yoakam's latest release, *If There Was a Way*, mean-spirited. While Rich Kienzle acknowledges the professionalism of Dwight Yoakam and his producer, Pete Anderson, he does so only grudgingly. In fact, throughout the entire review it seems that the reviewer wanted desperately to find something he could criticize. But, because Mr. Yoakam and his associates operate on such a high plane, Kienzle could only offer readers spineless comments and empty musings. Mr. Yoakam's work will stand the test of time.

Jana Pendragon
Long Beach, California

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I am so excited to be the newest winner of the \$1,000 Renewal Sweepstakes! I must tell you this couldn't have come at a better time. It's going to be the down payment for a greatly needed new car. I would like to take this opportunity to tell you how much I enjoy *Country Music Magazine*. Although I appreciate many kinds of music, my roots in the Midwest are total country. It's wonderful to read about the oldies I've known all my life, and the babies in the business too.

Karla Richard
North Palm Beach, Florida

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Ronnie Milsap: Almost Like A Song

(Autobiography) He was virtually blind at birth. Born into poverty in the Smokey Mountains, his mother abandoned him at the age of one. He was taken from his home and placed in the hands of strangers when he was six. And yet, despite it all, Ronnie Milsap went on to become one of the hottest singers in contemporary music - a performer who holds more music awards than any other male country singer alive today - with more number-one songs for RCA than even Elvis. This is his long-awaited and inspiring autobiography. Hardcover - 272 Pages - 52 Photos. Item No. B5D - Now 19.95

Jimmie Rodgers: The Life And Times Of America's Blue Yodeler

This recently re-released biography by Nolan Porterfield has long been considered a masterpiece by those in country music circles. Take for example the critique by Bill Malone, author and renowned country music expert in his own right, "Not only has Porterfield given us the most complete and

accurate account of Rodgers that we are likely to get; he has also provided some of the most valuable insights about early country music, and the South, that can be found in any published work." That's a strong statement, but this book is everything Malone says, and more. Order now and save. Hardcover - 460 Pages - Illustrated. Item No. B4J - Regularly \$29.95 - Now \$27.95

Bill Anderson: Whisperin' Bill

(Autobiography) In 1984 Bill Anderson approached his twenty-fifth anniversary in country music. He was a success at everything he tried...on top of the world. Then, in a single moment, his life turned upside down. A drunk driver hit his wife Becky's car and she suffered life threatening injuries. In this compelling account, Bill interweaves the dramatic story of his wife's accident, and its irrevocable imprint on their lives, with his recollections from almost thirty years in show business. Filled with rare honesty, warmth, compassion, and gratitude, Bill's book both entertains and inspires. Hardcover - 468 Pages - Illustrated. Item No. B1B - Only \$14.95

Bob Wills: San Antonio Rose

For more than fifty years Bob Wills entertained the nation with western swing classics such as his *San Antonio Rose*, *Faded Love* and *Steel Guitar Rag*. This Charles Townsend biography from the prestigious University of Illinois Press has become the absolute authority on this legendary performer and the brand of music he played. As *Publishers Weekly* said in their original 1976 review, "Townsend's affection for the music and the man is infectious...a fine, engaging, and valuable biography." Softcover - 7" x 10" - 390 Pages - 200 Illustrations. Item B3B - Only \$12.50

Hank Williams: Sing A Sad Song

Nich Tosches of *Country Music* called it, "A must-read for anyone interested in the man and his songs." Author Roger Williams has resisted the impulse to sensationalize and delivered an accurate and dispassionate perspective of Hank's childhood, his spectacular rise to fame, and the physical and emotional deterioration which finally killed him. This incredibly well-researched edition also contains perhaps the most comprehensive discography you will find anywhere. Softcover - 6" x 9" - 318 Pages. Item No. B1F - Only \$10.95

Roy Acuff: The Smoky Mountain Boy

From humble roots as the son of a Baptist preacher to the "dean" of the Grand Ole Opry, this is Roy Acuff's heartwarming biography, as told by author and long-time fan Elizabeth Schlappi. She draws upon hundreds of personal interviews with Roy's friends, family, associates, and

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B. Mandrell: Get To The Heart

(Autobiography) This poignant autobiography, written with George Vecsey, made a meteoric climb up the *New York Times* Bestseller list. And why not...this is both a fascinating and inspiring book. In style, it resembles Bill Anderson's autobiography, the thread tying it together being her near-fatal 1984 automobile accident. Although some critics have described her image as sticky sweet, you will find Barbara blunt, gossipy and outspoken here. She holds nothing back. The feistiness and determination she demonstrated back in her youth is reflected on every page. The anecdotes are honest, revealing and funny at times. The story is one that must be read. Hardcover - Pages - Illustrated. Item No. B1G - Now \$19.95

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†Selections with two numbers count as two selections—write each number in a separate box.

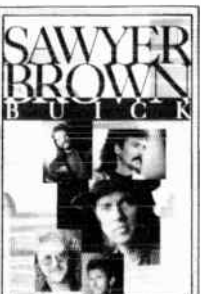
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Essential Collector / *by Rich Kienzle*

Germany's Bear Family Records is 16 years old this year. Before any U.S. labels took reissues seriously, Bear Family's Richard Weize showed the right way to do them: with elaborate packaging, never-before-issued (often newly discovered) material, new research and rare, often previously unpublished photos. Granted, Bear Family releases are geared to hardcore fans who want the complete story. Being complete means including unissued songs, some great, others that could have remained unissued. No matter: For completeness—and sound quality—no one outdoes Bear Family.

All these Bear Family products have been out for several years. As in *Buried Treasures*, I'll simply tell you what the product includes if I was involved in the project.

Boots Randolph: Many of Boots Randolph's hit albums on the Monument label have been reissued by CBS, which now owns Monument. However, Boots' first recordings were done for RCA after Chet Atkins discovered him in the late 1950's. *Yakety Sax* (BCD 15459) covers all of Randolph's RCA sides from 1958 through 1960.

Boots was working in Indiana nightclubs with guitarist Spider Rich, an Atkins-style player and friend of Chet's who sent Chet a tape of Boots' work. Though devoted to modern jazz, Boots came to Nashville, began recording for RCA, then started playing on other artists' sessions. The material, including the original 1958 version of "Yakety Sax," consists mainly of pop-country and rock instrumentals with a few vocals thrown in. Randolph tried everything from the rocking "Percolator" and pop standards like "Sleep," "Teach Me Tonight" and "Temptation" to the novelty ditty, "Big Daddy." In fact, his recording career

didn't really gel until he joined Monument in 1963. Nevertheless, the Victor sides show his direction had been mapped out several years earlier.



Country All Stars: In 1972 Chet Atkins recorded an LP with Nashville's top session musicians (known in every era as the A-Team) titled *Superpickers*. The idea was nothing new. It first surfaced in the early 50's with a recording band called the Country All Stars, a group of that era's A-Team Nashville pickers that included Chet, steel guitarist Jerry Byrd, fiddler Dale Potter, guitarist Homer Haynes, mandolinist Jethro Burns (Chet's brother-in-law) and bassist Charlie Grean. Homer and Jethro, of course, backed Chet on his early RCA sides in addition to recording their famous song parodies. Eight numbers were released on a 10-inch LP in the 50's and later reissued on a Japanese RCA LP.

The LP, *Jazz From the Hills* (BFX 15350), assembles all 16 of the All Stars' 1953-55 RCA recordings in one place for the first time. Most are country, pop and jazz tunes built around Chet's firey, youthful lead guitar, Jethro's swinging mandolin, Byrd's buttery-toned (non-pedal) steel and Potter's heavy-bowed, thick fiddling. Each gets a chance to solo, and some tunes outright feature individual players. Chet, for example, dominates "Stompin' at the Savoy" and "Ten-

nessee Rag." "Fiddle Patch" and "Fiddle Sticks" are, not surprisingly, Potter showcases, while Byrd shines on the old big band number, "Marie." Homer Haynes, whose rhythm guitar drives the drummerless (on all but one track) group, sings on several old pop tunes, "What's the Reason," "Do Something" and "My Little Girl."

Wynn Stewart: Buck Owens and Merle Haggard are seen today as the definers of the "Bakersfield Sound" of the 60's. However, the people who really laid the foundation for Buck and Merle were Tommy Collins ("Leonard" of the Merle Haggard hit) and Missouri native, Wynn Stewart. Wynn made his big name with Capitol in 1967 with "It's Such a Pretty World Today." He had one hit in 1956 with Capitol, but his first real success came with Challenge Records in the late 50's and early 60's. *Wishful Thinking: The Challenge Years, 1958-1963* (BFD 15261) covers all material available (two songs have been lost): 41 songs on two LP's.



Five Challenge recordings hit the charts, the most successful, "Wishful Thinking," reaching Number Five in 1960. "Big Big Love," a Top 20 record in 1961, was revived by k.d. lang recently. Wynn's recording of "Playboy" was not a hit at the time, but became one of the early anthems of Bakersfield singers, revived by Buck Owens on his 1989 LP, *Act Naturally*. And "Wrong Company," Wynn's duet with

Jan Howard, was a minor hit in 1950 (another Stewart-Howard pairing, "Yankee Go Home," was a musical disaster). The earliest tracks, from April 1958, were half-baked attempts to turn the hard-country Stewart into a teen-rock star. The next five are previously unissued, hard country numbers featuring steel guitar from Ralph Mooney (Mooney can be heard on almost every track here). In fact, a number of interesting sidemen show up on these recordings, including fiddler Gordon Terry, guitarist Roy Nichols (who would later spend years with Merle Haggard) and, on the last two sides, Haggard himself playing bass.

Nashville All Stars: Don't confuse these guys with the aggregation above. One of the recreational diversions for the Nashville A-Team of the late 50's "Nashville Sound" era (a different group from the one around in the early 50's), made up of Chet, Boots, guitar virtuoso Hank Garland, pianist Floyd Cramer, bassist Bob Moore, drummer Buddy Harman and others, was to play modern jazz at night at Nashville's Carousel Club in Printer's Alley. None of these guys were really jazz musicians (only Garland successfully made that transition), but in 1960 after Newport Jazz Festival promoter George Wein heard them in Nashville, he invited them to the 1960 Newport Festival. RCA planned to record their performance, but drunken, rioting college kids shut down the entire event, and the A-Team never had the chance to perform.

After the Riot at Newport (BCD 15447) came about when RCA decided to record the group on the porch of the rented Newport mansion where they were staying. Most of the jazz instrumentals here aren't on a par with the best modern jazz of that day,

yet the enthusiasm of everyone comes through on originals like "Nashville to Newport" and "Riot-Chous." Chet dominates "Frankie and Johnny," while Boots' and Garland's jazz skills (Hank would record his famous LP, *Jazz Winds from a New Direction*, that year) are clear on "Relaxin'." The Horace Silver jazz standard, "Opus De Funk," features the late fiddler music educator, Brenton Banks, playing hot swing, a sound far different from his conservative orchestral work on many "Nashville Sound" sessions.

Jimmy Work: If composer-singer Jimmy Work had done nothing other than write the classics, "Tennessee Border," "That's What Makes the Jukebox Play" and "Making Believe," he would be a legend, as all three songs have been hits numerous times for numerous artists. He performed professionally throughout the 40's and 50's, but his career petered out, and he eventually returned to his home near Dukedom, Tennessee (the "Tennessee Border" of his song), where he worked fulltime as a millwright and wrote songs for Acuff-Rose Publishing on the side. A respectable, Hank Williams-style vocalist, Work had only two hits himself ("Making Believe" and "That's What Makes the Jukebox Play" in 1955) for Dot Records, both among the greatest songs ever recorded in any era, and it's often forgotten that Work had been recording earlier on.

All his 1954-56 Dot recordings are available on the LP, *Making Believe* (BFX 15177). *Crazy Moon* (BFX 15267) fills in the gaps before Dot: a 14-song collection including his six 1949 Decca recordings and all eight 1952-53 Capitol sides, produced by a then-young Ken Nelson, who later became a legend at Capitol producing Buck Owens and Merle Haggard. Among the tunes here are "Crazy Moon," an excellent ballad written by Work that deserved more exposure than it got. Work's "Bluegrass Ticklin' My Feet" was an early example of the bluegrass

sound trickling into mainstream country. It wasn't a hit, but became a favorite of Hank Williams Sr.

Luke Wills: With the death of Billy Jack Wills, only one "Wills Brother" remains alive: next-to-youngest brother Luke, longtime bass player and occasional vocalist for The Texas Playboys. Now retired, living in Las Vegas at last report, Luke himself recorded for King Records and for RCA during 1947. This activity came during a time when Bob wanted to have a second band to handle some of the excess Playboys dance dates.

Initially, Luke formed his own band and recorded for King Records, then cut 20 songs at six RCA Victor sessions in 1947 under the name of "Luke Wills' Rhythm Busters." All 20 are compiled on the LP, *High Voltage Gal* (BFX 15333). The first eight numbers were actually recorded with members of Bob's then-current group of Texas Playboys, including guitarists Junior Barnard and Eldon Shamblin and fiddler Joe Holley. Several instrumentals are actually Wills numbers with different titles. "Cain's Stomp" (named for Bob's home dancehall in Tulsa, Cain's Academy) is actually the Playboys' "Osage Stomp." "Bob Wills Two-Step" was in fact "Spanish Two-Step"; "Louisiana Blues" is actually "Big Beaver."

Luke's own band included a number of talented musicians, including L.A. fiddler Robert Berg (better known as "Bobby Bruce"), Joe Holley, pianist Sid Barnes and guitarist Dick Morgan. Much of the

rest of the material consists of mediocre novelty tunes, which, according to my interview with Luke for the notes, Bob had rejected (thrown on the floor) at an earlier recording session. The instrumental work, however, is more the point than the (admittedly awful) lyrics.



Del Reeves: Franklin Delano Reeves, named for the nation's only three-term president, began his career recording for Capitol nearly a decade before "Girl on the Billboard" gave him his first Number One record in 1965. The LP, *Baby, I Love You* (BFX 15259), covers 16 of Del's earliest recordings including his first 1957 duets with singer-mandolinist Chester Smith, recorded for Capitol on the West Coast. In these duets, particularly on "One Life to Live," the two sound like The Louvin Brothers.

By 1958, Capitol producer Ken Nelson had Reeves playing rock 'n' roll, something with which he was never terribly comfortable. These sessions, however, included lead guitar by an obscure Capitol Records studio guitarist named Buck Owens. The records didn't sell. 1961 found

Reeves recording for independent producer, Slim Williamson, who leased the recordings to whatever label was interested. The first was Decca. With them Reeves had his first hit, "Be Quiet Mind," in 1961, followed by the Johnny Cash-flavored Number 11 hit, "He Stands Real Tall," for Decca in 1962 and "The Only Girl I Can't Forget" for Reprise in 1963.

Gary Burton: Also on the Nashville All Stars' Newport date was teenage vibraphonist Gary Burton, an Indiana native whom Boots Randolph discovered and brought to Nashville during the summer of 1960. By 1966 Burton was becoming a major name in modern jazz through his work with saxophonist Stan Getz, who popularized Brazilian bossa nova music in America. Unlike some jazz musicians, Burton maintained a strong respect for country pickers; that year he brought Getz' bassist and drummer, along with saxophone player Steve Marcus, to Nashville. Encouraged by the open-minded Chet Atkins, the group cut an album that mixed jazz and country performers, each playing in his own style.

The result was *Tennessee Firebird* (BCD 15458), an album truly ahead of its time. Twenty-five years later it remains palatable to both jazz and country fans. The group tackles the Hank Williams standards, "Alone and Forsaken" and "I Can't Help It," along with "Faded Love," "Gone," "Born to Lose" and "Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair" (the latter two are Atkins-Burton duets). They also take on Burton's own "Tennessee Firebird" and "Beauty Contest," the latter a full-blown "battle of the bands" featuring the jazz players swapping choruses with the country soloists, among them banjoist Sonny Osborne and fiddler Buddy Spicher. Another original, "Walter L.," pays tribute to Hank (a.k.a. "Walter Louis") Garland, whose Nashville studio career had ended after a crippling auto accident.

How to Get These Collectibles

Available in formats shown at prices shown. Boots Randolph, *Yakety Sax* (BCD 15459) CD only \$26.98/Country All Stars, *Jazz From the Hills* (BFX 15350) LP only \$16.98/Nashville All Stars, *After the Riot at Newport* (BCD 15447) CD only \$26.98/Jimmy Work, *Making Believe* (BFX 15177) LP only \$16.98/Work, *Crazy Moon* (BFX 15267) LP only \$16.98/Wynn Stewart, *Wishful Thinking: The Challenge Years, 1958-1963* (BFD 15261) a two-LP set \$25.98/Del Reeves, *Baby, I Love You* (BFX 15259) LP only \$16.98/Luke Wills, *High Voltage Gal* (BFX 15333) LP only \$16.98/Gary Burton, *Tennessee Firebird* (BCD 15458) CD only \$26.98. Send check or money order payable to Nashville Warehouse to Nashville Warehouse, Dept. 5691EC, P.O. Box 290216, Nashville, TN 37229. Add \$1.95 postage and handling for first item, \$.95 each additional. **CMSA Members, see For Members Only page for discounts.**

Buried Treasures

by Rich Kienzle

For the past several years, most of MCA's country reissue activity centered on Patsy Cline. Now, together with the Country Music Foundation, the company is turning to the rest of its vast catalog, which includes some of the greatest music of any era. This should have been done long ago. The resulting series, titled *Country Music Hall of Fame*, includes E.T., Kitty Wells, Loretta Lynn and more. Read on:

Ernest Tubb: Longhorn's album, *Ernest Tubb Favorites*, and Rounder's *Honky Tonk Classics* have long been the only E.T. anthologies containing any of his original hits. Most of the cuts on MCA's old double-album, *The Ernest Tubb Story*, were re-recordings. This new cassette/CD collection, titled simply *Ernest Tubb* (MCAD 10086), is the Real Thing: 16 original gems from 1941-1965, beginning with "Walking the Floor Over You," "Soldier's Last Letter" and such 40's favorites as "Tomorrow Never Comes," "It's Been So Long Darling," "Seaman's Blues" and "Have You Ever Been Lonely."

The 50's are represented by "Letters Have No Arms," the playful "Throw Your Love My Way," "Fortunes in Memories," the never-issued 1953 recording, "Love Lifted Me" (a 1975 hit for Kenny Rogers), and Cindy Walker's bubbly honky-tonker, "Two Glasses, Joe." Things wind up with "Thanks a Lot" (1963), his final Top Ten record, and the immortal "Waltz Across Texas." The compilation and notes come from CMF staffer Ronnie Pugh, the world's foremost Tubb authority. Only one thing baffles me: why does "Thanks a Lot," recorded on tape, sound noisier than some of the 1940's recordings?

Kitty Wells: Kitty Wells just won a well-deserved Grammy for lifetime achievement, and this 16-song set, *Kitty Wells*



(MCAD 10081), explains why. It covers most of her high points from 1952 to 1965 beginning with "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels," the 1952 answer to Hank Thompson's "Wild Side of Life." In fact, Kitty raised the "answer" song to high art. "My Cold, Cold Heart Is Melted Now" answered Hank Williams' "Cold, Cold Heart." Several selections weren't hits but are excellent nonetheless, including her 1952 cover of Faron Young's early, obscure recording, "I Heard the Juke Box Playing," "Iceicles Hanging From Your Heart" and "I'd Rather Stay Home."

You know the rest of these: "Release Me," "Making Believe," "I Gave My Wedding Dress Away," "Searching," her interpretation of Don Gibson's "I Can't Stop Loving You" (it outsold Don's version), "Mommy for a Day," "Amigo's Guitar," "Heartbreak, U.S.A.," "Will Your Lawyer Talk to God," "Password" and her final Top 20 hit, "A Woman Half My Age," from 1966. Again, Ronnie Pugh's recording data and notes enhance the package.

Loretta Lynn: Loretta carried the torch beyond Patsy and Kitty by singing pure, raw country during Nashville's first bout with crossover music in the late 1960's and early 70's. The 15 gems on this album, *Loretta Lynn* (MCAD 10083), (plus, one awful mistake—more on that in a sec), deliver the essence of her music, from "Success" and "Mr. & Mrs. Used to

Be" (with Ernest Tubb) to "Blue Kentucky Girl," "Fist City" and "Your Squaw Is on the Warpath." Her most memorable era, the early 70's, begins with "You're Lookin' at Country," "The Pill," "One's on the Way," "When the Tingle Becomes a Chill," "After the Fire Is Gone" (with Conway), "Don't Come Home A-Drinkin'" and, of course, "Coal Miner's Daughter."

Should there have been more duets with Twitty? No. Her best duets merit another entire collection. The one inexcusable goof was using a 1968 Decca re-recording of Loretta's first hit, "I'm a Honky Tonk Girl," instead of the original version on the Zero label. Why would the CMF, of all people, do this? If they couldn't obtain rights to the original, why not include "You Wanna Give Me a Lift" or Loretta's Number One hit, "Woman of the World"?

Bill Monroe: If Bear Family's incredible, upcoming CD-boxed chronicle of Bill Monroe's MCA years, titled simply *Volume 2, 1959-1969* (we'll review it next issue), is more Monroe than you need, MCA's *Bill Monroe* (MCAD 10082) may be just right. It hits the high points of Monroe's first 38 years with Decca (1950-1988), starting with his 1950 version of "Mule Skinner Blues," the original recording of "Uncle Pen" (a Number One record for Ricky Skaggs in 1984) and the 1954 Decca remake of "Blue Moon of Kentucky," the waltz which Bill rearranged in

tribute to Elvis' Sun Records version. Kentucky HeadHunters fans curious to hear the original 1969 version of "Walk Softly on This Heart of Mine" will find it here, along with such Monroe instrumental showcases as "White House Blues," "Scotland" (homage to Bill's Scotch ancestors), "Kentucky Mandolin" and the still-amazing 1981 number, "My Last Days on Earth," inspired by Bill's successful battle with cancer. Including a duet with Ricky Skaggs ("My Sweet Blue-Eyed Darlin'") was quite appropriate; so was winding up the collection with "Southern Flavor" from 1988, the title cut of the album that won him the first bluegrass Grammy ever.

Red Foley: For years the only available Red Foley collection was an awful double set of re-recorded hits cut before he died in 1968. This new one, *Red Foley* (MCAD 10084), touches on all facets of Foley's versatility, starting with his 1944 cover of Bob Wills' "Hang Your Head in Shame," through 1945's "Old Shep" (Elvis won a prize singing this song at a Mississippi fair) and Tim Spencer's elegant ballad, "Careless Kisses." His best hillbilly boogies, "Tennessee Saturday Night" (1947) and "Chattanooga Shoe Shine Boy" (1950), are both here, as are three powerful gospel performances, "Just a Closer Walk With Thee," "When God Dips His Love in My Heart" and his immortal rendition of "Peace in the Valley"—he sang this last one at Hank Williams' funeral.

Red's pop singing skills shine on "Alabama Jubilee." He also sings the blues authoritatively, as demonstrated on "Deep Blues" and the underrated Boudleaux Bryant-Chet Atkins blues, "Midnight" (a Number One hit with Chet and Grady Martin on guitars in 1952). His hit version of Hank Garland's "Sugarfoot Rag" features Garland himself

on guitar. Two duets round things out: "As Far as I'm Concerned" with his daughter Betty and "One by One" with Kitty Wells, one of the first male-female superstar duet hits. The notes by CMF staffer John Rumble are fine.

Jimmie Rodgers: The cover story of the Premier Collector's Edition of the new *Journal of the American Academy for the Preservation of Old-Time Country Music* featured, appropriately enough, Jimmie Rodgers, The Source of Just About Everything That's Happened in the Past 60 Years. Unbelievable as it may seem, for years there were no American reissues of Rodgers albums available, only European imports. Rounder has moved to remedy this situation with their projected series of Rodgers' complete recordings. The first two volumes, *First Sessions* (Rounder 1056) and *The Early Years* (Rounder 1957), cover 30 numbers from 1927 through 1929, beginning on *Volume 1* with "The Soldier's Sweetheart" and "Sleep, Baby Sleep," cut at the legendary Bristol Sessions in 1927.

From his early 1928 sessions come the first three "Blue Yodels," as well as "Treasures Untold," "In the Jailhouse Now," "Brakeman's Blues" and half a dozen more. *Volume 2* has "Blue Yodels Four and Five," "Any Old Time," "Never No Mo' Blues," "Mississippi Moon," "My Carolina Sunshine Gal," "Waiting for a Train" and two versions of "I'm Lonely and Blue"—an unissued solo version and the released version recorded several months later with a backup band. The packages include rare photos and notes by the one person qualified to do them: Rodgers biographer Nolan Porterfield. (Porterfield also wrote the article for *The Journal*.)

Jerry Lee Lewis: If you're a hardcore Jerry Lee fan with a CD player, all his known Sun recordings from 1956-1963 (246 in all) on eight compact discs can be found on Bear Family's *Classic Jerry Lee Lewis: 1956-1963* (BCD 15420), including 30 numbers never

before issued. Multiple takes of several songs and Lewis' famous argument with Sam Phillips over religion also figure into the total and, admittedly, this is a lot of Jerry Lee. Among other things, it includes the early sides produced by Jack "Cowboy" Clement, starting with the first session in November 1956 that produced "Crazy Arms" and "End of the Road."

Naturally all the Sun hits, "Great Balls of Fire," "Whole Lotta Shakin'," "Breathless," "What'd I Say," "High School Confidential" and the rest are included, as are songs that demonstrate how broad his musical roots were. He rips through "The Marines Hymn," other rock hits including "Ooby Dooby" and "Blue Suede Shoes" and pop, folk and country tunes ranging from "Little Green Valley" and "Old Black Joe" to "Shanty Town" and Glenn Miller's "In the Mood." One caution: *don't* play Disc 3, selection 1 when your kids are around as Jerry Lee engages in some X-rated banter that was caught on the tape. As with all Bear Family boxed sets, this one comes with a comprehensive book, with plenty of rare photos.

Johnny Horton: How much Dwight Yoakam was indebted to Johnny Horton became clear when Yoakam had a hit with "Honky Tonk Man" in 1986, 30 years after Horton had done the same. Horton in his rocking mood differed greatly from the "singing historian" of "North to Alaska" and "Battle of New Orleans," but he sounds as fresh singing this way today as when he

made the recording in 1956. Bear Family's 20-song compact disc, *Rockin' Rollin' Johnny Horton* (BCD 15543) covers this period (1956-1960) comprehensively with two never-released numbers thrown in. These performances featured a small, tight recording band built around Grady Martin's throbbing lead guitar. If you like Marty Stuart's latest album, *Tempted*, these 30-35-year-old sides have the same feel. The digital remastering makes "Honky Tonk Man," "I'm a One-Woman Man" (revived by George Jones a couple of years ago), "Honky Tonk Hardwood Floor," "Sleepy Eyed John" and "The Wild One" even more powerful. The accompanying booklet includes an incredible rare photo of Elvis and Horton together and detailed recording data.

Curley Williams: You may never have heard of Curley Williams and his hot Western swing band, The Georgia Peach Pickers, unless you listened to the Opry in the mid-1940's, bought his Columbia recordings or recall his connection with Hank Williams (no relation)—not only did Curley write "Half as Much," Curley's longtime steel player, Boots Harris, played in Hank's original pre-World War II Drifting Cowboys. Nearly all Curley's Columbia sides deserve reissuing. Unless and until that happens, Old Homestead's *Radio Favorites* (OHCS-197), made up of what appear to be early 50's radio transcriptions, gives an idea of Will-

iams' sound. Some numbers are much like the Columbia originals, including "When You're Tired of Breaking Other Hearts." Also included are cover versions of Hank's "There'll Be No Teardrops Tonight," "You Win Again" (the final song Curley recorded for Columbia in 1951) and "No Not Now"—the latter in a delightfully swinging arrangement. "Just Pickin' and Singin'" plugs fellow Columbia artists Johnny Bond, Al Dexter and Ted Daffan. This terrific little band did much to bring Western swing into the Southeast; it merits greater recognition.

The Time-Warp Tophands: Then there's today's Western swing. Texas steel guitarist Tom Morrell has assembled an awesome group known as the Time-Warp Tophands for *How the West Was Swung* (Priority Cassette PTS-3002), the hottest modern Western swing recorded in years. Jazz pianist Johnny Case, fiddlers Rick Solomon and Bob Boatright, three former Playboys—guitarist Benny Garcia, drummer Tommy Perkins and vocalist Leon Rausch—and two other vocalists, Lanny Long and Western singer Don Edwards, play songs of the past with today's punch and inventiveness. Even Asleep at the Wheel couldn't top this.

Morrell shines on two steel guitar showpieces: Noel Boggs' "Steelin' Home" and Leon McAuliffe's "Mr. Steel Guitar." There are such Bob Wills standards as "I Can't Go On This Way," "Hang Your Head in Shame," an amazing, big-band arrangement of "I Didn't Realize," "Misery" and "Sweet Kind of Love." Rausch, who knows these songs frontwards and backwards, sings them better than ever. The Tophands' version of "Oh, Lonesome Me" is as much jazz as country, and Edwards does a fine job with "When It's Roundup Time in Texas." This amazing cassette deserves more exposure than it will get. Morrell's charming, hand-drawn cartoon cover gives it just the right touch. It's already one of my Top Ten favorites for 1991.

How to Get These Treasures

Available in formats shown at prices shown: MCA Hall of Fame series, *Ernest Tubb* (MCA 10086), *Kitty Wells* (MCA 10081), *Loretta Lynn* (MCA 10083), *Bill Monroe* (MCA 10082), *Red Foley* (10084); in this series each CD \$19.98, each cassette \$12.98/Jimmie Rodgers, *First Sessions* (Rounder 1056) CD \$19.98, LP or cassette \$11.98/Jimmie Rodgers, *The Early Years* (Rounder 1057) CD \$19.98, LP or cassette \$11.98/Jerry Lee Lewis, *Classic Jerry Lee Lewis: 1956-1963* (BCD 15420) eight-CD boxed set, \$199.00/Johnny Horton, *Rockin' Rollin' Johnny Horton* (BCD 15543) CD only \$24.98/The Time-Warp Tophands, *How the West Was Swung* (PTS 3002) cassette only \$9.98.

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TOP 25

Singles

1. Garth Brooks *Two of a Kind, Workin' on a Full House*
2. Alan Jackson *I'd Love You All Over Again*
3. Rony Travis *Heroes and Friends*
4. Alabama *Down Home*
5. Clint Black *Loving Blind*
6. Don Williams *True Love*
7. Shenandoah *I Got You*
8. Patty Loveless *I'm That Kind of Girl*
9. Conway Twitty *I Couldn't See You Leavin'*
10. Billy Dean *Only Here For a Little While*
11. The Forester Sisters .. *Men*
12. Dolly Parton and
Ricky Van Shelton ... *Rockin' Years*
13. Travis Tritt *Drift Off to Dream*
14. Reba McEntire *Fancy*
15. Vince Gill *Pocket Full of Gold*
16. Mike Reid *Walk on Faith*
17. Ronnie Milsap *Are You Lovin' Me Like I'm Lovin' You*
18. Pam Tillis *Don't Tell Me What to Do*
19. George Strait *If I Know Me*
20. Mary Chapin
Carpenter *Right Now*
21. Joe Diffie *If You Want Me To*
22. Kathy Mattea *Time Passes By*
23. Mark Collie *Let Her Go*
24. Mark Chesnutt *Brother Jukebox*
25. Paul Overstreet *Heroes*

Albums

1. Garth Brooks *No Fences*
2. Clint Black *Put Yourself in My Shoes*
3. Reba McEntire *Rumor Has It*
4. Alan Jackson *Here in the Real World*
5. Garth Brooks *Garth Brooks*
6. Kentucky
HeadHunters *Pickin' on Nashville*
7. The Judds *Love Can Build a Bridge*
8. Vince Gill *When I Call Your Name*
9. Clint Black *Killin' Time*
10. Dwight Yoakam *If There Was a Way*
11. Randy Travis *Heroes and Friends*
12. Ricky Van Shelton ... *RVS III*
13. K.T. Oslin *Love in a Small Town*
14. Mark Chesnutt *Too Cold at Home*
15. Kathy Mattea *A Collection of Hits*
16. Travis Tritt *Country Club*
17. Alabama *Pass It On Down*
18. Keith Whitley *Greatest Hits*
19. Hank Williams Jr. *America (The Way I See It)*
20. Paul Overstreet *Heroes*
21. George Strait *Livin' It Up*
22. Mike Reid *Turning For Home*
23. Vince Gill *Pocket Full of Gold*
24. Patty Loveless *On Down the Line*
25. Doug Stone *Doug Stone*

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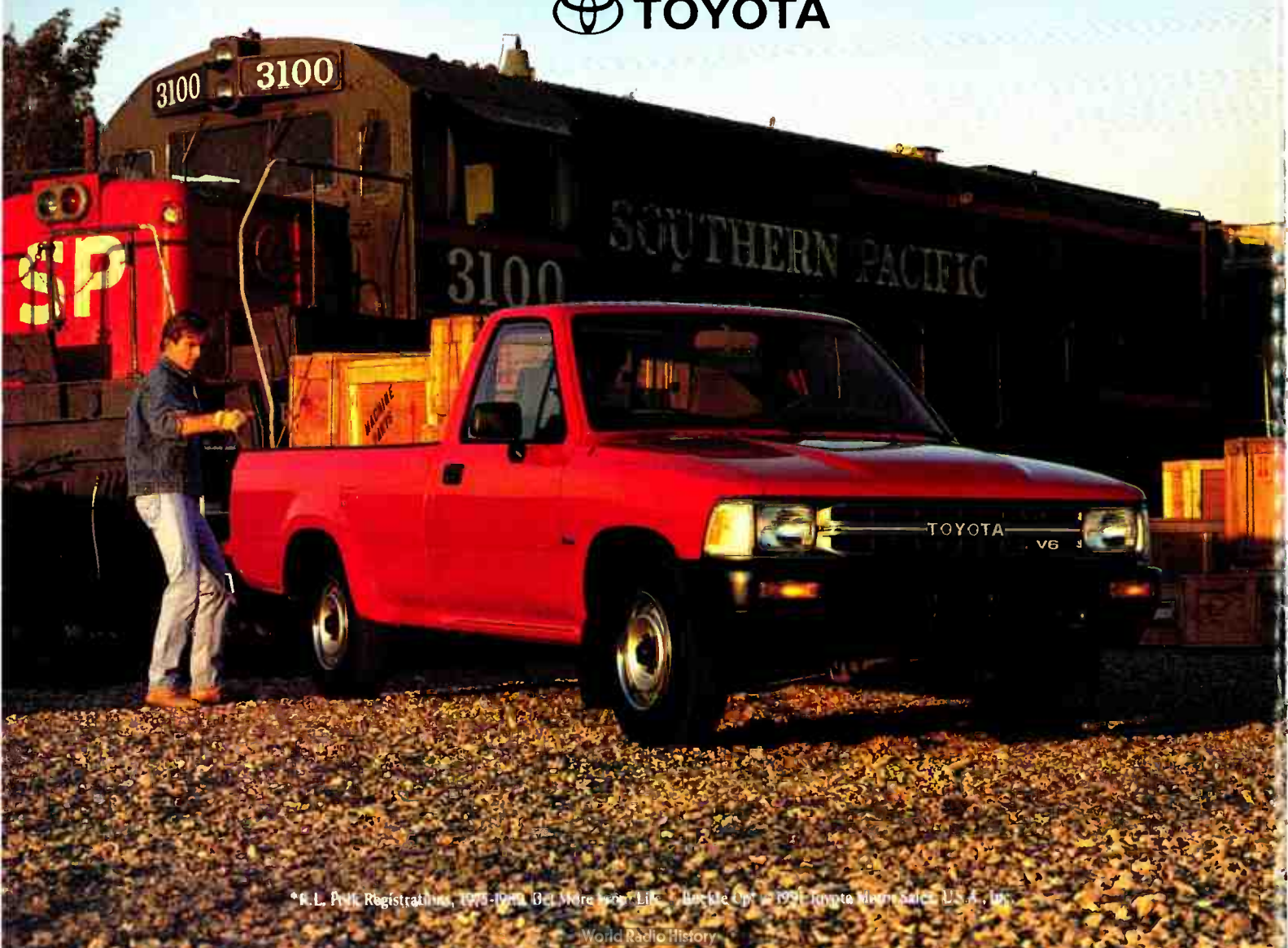
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